

The Australian **WOMEN'S WEEKLY**

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JOHN
HANTY

COVER ILLUSTRATION
FROM "NIGHT FLIGHT"
PAGE 3

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All-Australian Fiction Issue

These Australians wrote our special story issue



ESTHER ROLAND, who wrote "No Power Now," has been "scribbling," as she calls it, since she was six.



JEAN MERRIFIELD'S "Digger of Yeronga" will appeal to every dog-lover.



LAURENCE FEATHERSTONE writes slick crime stories. His contribution is "I'll Get the Pictures."

Here are some of our new writers and a word about their work

By LESLIE HAYLEN

The Australian Women's Weekly proudly presents this all-Australian fiction issue as a unique contribution to the development of the Australian writer.

THE writers featured are new to the Australian public, but the high quality of their work attracted the favorable attention of the judges in our £2000 fiction contest.

This all-Australian issue is an outcome of the judges' decision that the public would enjoy reading their stories.

They were not first-prize winners, but were too good to be missed. I feel you will be as

proud of these new writers as we are.

Let's introduce them to you. When we got the MSS of "Night Flight," by George Graham (R.A.A.F.), it bore this legend:

"I'm writing this by candle-light at a R.A.A.F. training station."

When the judges got round to George Graham's story he was in the thick of it at an advanced battle station.

We were able to inform him:



A. S. WHITE wrote "Frocks by Gannett," a delightful comedy romance.

"Your tiny candle will gleam out on half a million readers soon."

His story is on page 3. The cover design by Santry is also from Mr. Graham's story.

Now, how good can a dog story be? Miss Jean Merrifield set us this problem with her sheep-dog story, "Digger of Yeronga." We consider it a masterpiece, and as Australian as the sheep station which is its setting.

Miss Merrifield lives at Box Hill, Vic., and she tells us the story of "Digger of Yeronga" is founded on fact.

Laurence Featherstone, author of "I'll Get the Pictures," is a lean 6ft. Australian who has written a lot of stories. This is his first for The Australian Women's Weekly. He says he has been everything from rabbit-trapper to printer.

He lives on his launch, Ioby.

"I have no other home but my launch," he writes, "plus one wife, also a scribbler, and one cat."

Miss A. S. White, responsible for the comedy romance, "Frocks by Gannett," is a typist, of Clayfield, Brisbane. She has been writing since her schooldays.

"Frocks by Gannett" is her first humorous story.

Loves Aussie slang

MR. B. E. KIRWAN WARD, who wrote "Little Alfie," is an Englishman in love with Aussie slang. "Little Alfie" is the happy result. Here is his own biography:

"Born Oxford thirty-three years ago. Attended Lincoln Grammar School and Panton College, where I successfully frustrated all attempts to educate me. A sports fanatic, I cherished an ambition to become a sports cartoonist.

"Came to Australia at the age of 18, hoping to break into journalism, but the plaintive wails of the wolf at the door compelled me to change my plans. Joined the staff of a large financial institution in 1927, and am now one of its oldest inhabitants.

"In 1938 I made one of the few sensible moves in my career when I married a West Australian girl. Am



FRANK NUNN'S "The Belled Boy" introduces a touch of the grim into a well-told island yarn.

the fatuous father of an 18-months-old daughter.

"Have been trying to write as long as I can remember. My work has appeared in the waste-paper baskets of some of the world's most famous magazines. I struggled for years to achieve dignified prose, but the expressive appeal of Australian slang was too much for me, and I lapsed contentedly into my present vulgar style, which fathered 'Little Alfie.'"

Esther Roland goes on record in this way about herself and her story, "No Power Now."

"My literary career started at the age of six, when I wrote two stanzas of verse called 'Raindrops.'"

"I kept on producing similar stuff at intervals, but prose was my real love, and until I was fourteen or fifteen I was for ever scribbling away at things that were never finished, chiefly the first chapters of 'novels.'"

"At seventeen I wrote a book, and six months later carefully burned it, together with everything else I had ever written, right back to 'Raindrops.'"

"I wrote nothing more until after I was married, when my husband's tactful encouragement persuaded me actually to finish a short story and submit it to a magazine. Since then I have had several short stories published and broadcast.

"For the rest, I was born in the country, and still prefer to live there. I was educated at M.L.C., Burwood, and after leaving school spent three of the most interesting years of my life on my brother's property in Queensland. I am twenty-four, and have been married

two and a half years to a soldier in the A.I.F. Armored Division."

Frank Nunn, author of "The Belled Boy," is a pilot-officer in the Air Force, a bright, quick-voiced West Australian.

He is a writer of exceptional ability.

In the brief messages we get from him he says he has a great idea for a war novel.

He has turned out good ones already.

His wife is his publicity agent and goes to various parts of the continent to be near her husband and pick up any spare MSS he has left about.

Ray Webster, author of "Why Murder Mr. Rundel?" is shy. He hasn't answered our request for details of his career.

Perhaps he prefers his rattling good thriller to speak for him.

A good sport

HENRIETTA DRAKE BROCKMAN, whose work appears in this issue, is already a famous novelist and dramatist. We have published many of her stories. "Look for the Blister" is one of the best.

We included her in this issue along with the new writers because Henrietta is such a thorough-paced sport. When the short-story contest was announced she sent us a story. "This is an entry for your fiction contest," she wrote.

"I hope some of the young up-and-coming ones can give it a tip on the nose."



B. E. KIRWAN WARD, author of "Little Alfie."



Excuse me—
Inner Cleanliness
is important too!

TAKE a bubbly glass of Andrews first thing in the morning to keep healthy and cool and refreshed.

FIRST ... Andrews cleans and refreshes the mouth and tongue.

NEXT ... Andrews settles the stomach and corrects acidity, the chief cause of indigestion.

THEN ... Andrews acts directly on the liver and checks biliousness.

FINALLY ... To complete your Inner Cleanliness, Andrews gently clears the bowels. It sweeps away trouble - making poisons, and thoroughly corrects Constipation.

Andrews is ideal for every one and economical to use - take it regularly and be free from head, stomach, liver and Constipation troubles. Get some today.

For Inner Cleanliness be regular with your

ANDREWS
LIVER SALT

The Pleasant Effervescing Tonic Laxative

Night Flight

PUBLIC LIBRARY
22 DEC 1942
OF NEW SOUTH WALES

FLYING in loose formation at about twelve thousand feet, nine bombers hurtle through the night towards Tripoli. Below, the path of the full moon broadens into a great dazzling patch on the choppy waters of the Mediterranean.

From the astro hatch of the leading plane the navigator notes that it is an ideal night for flying. A bright moon and not too many clouds. Away to the south the heavy darkness of the coast is discernible only as a thin black line etched faintly. Somewhere farther inland in the chill murk of the desert are columns of men and machines constantly rumbling up along General Rommel's long lines stretching dangerously into Libya.

That's what makes this trip tonight so important. Perhaps it is why Russ Condon, perched in the astro hatch, feels more excited than usual.

"A large convoy has just reached Tripoli," the C.O. had said. "And you know what that means."

Of course. It would mean that Rommel would get more reinforcements. It would mean a lot of things. After all, with Japan in the war, the sooner North Africa was cleared the better. The sooner they'd be able to leave the place. About thirty ships, the C.O. had said. Managed to get across from Greece. They had to be destroyed tonight.

Far below, in the wake of the bombers, a trail of fleecy white clouds, tinted by the radiance of the moon ahead, dips down behind the hazy line where the illimitable blue of the clear night sky meets the darker shade of the Mediterranean. The sing-song note of the engines ebbs in smoothly. A deep, healthy sound.

Russ Condon looks about him and draws a deep breath. Close on either hand, sulphurous blue flames flicker from the glowing exhaust stubs and beyond each wing-tip the tips of the air-screw blades of the other bombers catch the moonlight and draw, in successive tiers, rows of faint, luminous circles against the sky.

There'll be a hot reception waiting for them at Tripoli Harbor. Flak, heavy ack-ack searchlights, pom-poms—

And night fighters.

They were the things you could never get used to. Those fights in the night sky. Especially when the moon is bright like to-night. The speed of the night fighters and their manoeuvrability allow them to attack without stalking and whis-

A dramatic story of the mateship of two airmen in love with the same girl.

about like death-dealing fireflies, only harder to see. And lately, with special paints and mufflers, and pilots who are scientifically trained to see in the dark, they're as elusive as the Angel of Death. Vampires of the night—who strike with deadly effect. They have it all over the bombers.

It is Friday night. Good lord, Friday, of course! There'd be crowds pressing on the blacked-out pavements of the city to-night. Strange to see it after the carnivals and chocolate wheels. The mannish din in the lobbies of the big hotels. That was all far, far away.

Far from Ann. Ann, with that black-and-white get-up of hers. With that mop of hair, dark and lustrous. That's how he always thought of her. Just as she stood there waiting in the hotel lobby on Friday evening. Waiting for Mac.

"She's the darnedest girl," Mac was saying as he led the way through the crowd towards her. "She's a nurse, but don't hold it against her."

And on reaching her he took her arm affectionately.

"Ann. This is the treat I promised you. If you don't like it, I'll wrap it up and send it back. But you should. Girls generally pay me a quid for an intro to him. The greatest cad you will ever meet. Russ Condon."

That was Mac's introduction. Russ often thought of that moment. The look they'd exchanged. The sort of bewildered amusement. There was something between them even then—even in that first exchange when she lifted her smiling eyes to his.

She wasn't pretty, Ann. Her mouth was a little too wide, maybe. Her nose a little too retrousse. But the sparkling health of her clear skin, the soft radiance of her smile made her seem faultless.

That evening was a success. From the first drivelling "How-do-you-do's" it went with a mad swing. The three of them dined and wine and laughed as never before. Mac's conversation became thickly delirious after he'd passed the one over the eight. After Mac passes that stage, he's very funny.

That was the night he took them in search of bird's nest soup, and on finding a Chinese cafe he insisted on accepting the invitation printed at the foot of the menu which read: An inspection of our kitchen is cordially invited.

The bewildered waitress ran to fetch the little proprietor. Dumb-founded, the chubby little man was forced to act as guide through his shabby little kitchen.

Please turn to page 4

"Go on, go on!
Kiss him!" Mac
said laughingly
to Ann.



THROUGH

that incident, and others, in his reckless tour of hospitality Mac left Russ and Ann many moments together.

That had been a hectic few days—or rather nights. For they only saw Ann after five-thirty. She worked all day in a doctor's consulting rooms.

How well he remembered those little scraps of conversation, indulged in while Mac was playing the reckless host—arguing with a taxi-driver—or assisting a bartender to mix a "Tiger's Milk"—

"So you're Ann?"

"Who cares?"

"I do. Do you realise I have to look at you every morning of my life?"

"Poor boy. Do you?"

"I do. Your picture is pinned up on Mac's side of the locker. We share it."

"The picture?"

"No. The locker."

"You must find it trying."

"On the contrary, it cheers me. And do you realise that Mac actually sings to your photograph?"

"Sings to it?"

"Sings to it while he's dressing! And what a horrible voice!"

That insane, enjoyable nonsense. It seemed to draw them together. It seemed to bind their lives with an understanding and a friendship that could never be broken.

And when they had parted on the night he and Mac were leaving to go back to the squadron—

"Well, Ann, it's been great."

"It has."

"I never thought I'd ever know anyone like you."

"Ho hum."

"I mean it. You're a great pair. You and Mac. I love you both."

"Oh, I like that, Russ!"

"I—sort of feel like a—"

"A guardian angel?"

"Something like that, Ann. Well, let's make this 'au revoir,' shall we?"

As they were shaking hands at the entry to the platform Mac had come meandering along.

"Oh, kiss him, Ann!" he implored. "It's the least you can do for a friend. Go on, go on, go on! Kiss him!"

Ann murmured:

"You big fool!"—and turned, slightly flushed, to Russ.

The kiss was very tender, with a gentle caress. But it was a mistake. It remained to haunt his thoughts, to tingle on his lips, for the whole of that long, cold train journey.

Back to the squadron. And the serious business of their course, Mac was doing advanced flying now. Russ the difficult business of navigation. Only a few months more before embarkation.

Mac used to read him parts of Ann's letters. For there were parts in them especially intended for him. He even occasionally scribbled a few remarks in Mac's letters to her. And between the two of them they spent several evenings composing a long and rambling poem to send her. A flattering, light-heartedly sentimental piece of pastiche called: The little gal called Ann. It caused a lot of fun.

Then there was his father's death. That had brought him down to the city alone on two days' special leave.

"Be sure and see Ann while you're there," Mac had insisted just before his train had left.

If Mac had only known. If he could have realised that it would have been impossible for him to have stayed two days in the city without seeing her. Almost as soon as the train had pulled out of the straggling railway yards, she was in his mind.

And the moment he arrived at his journey's end, he took a taxi from the railway to Ann's address.

He hadn't intended to do this. It almost seemed as though another person had acted for him, as though the driving desire that possessed his thoughts had suddenly crystallised itself in a decision over which he had no control. But here he was in

the spotless waiting-room, fingering the bell, wondering whether to ring or wait until she should come in—

She was suddenly before him. The sudden shock of seeing her took his breath away. He'd never seen her look so beautiful. Framed in the severe white uniform, her skin seemed more transparent, more radiant than ever before.

"Russ!" she said in breathless amazement. She crossed quickly to him, and he took both her hands.

"Ann! You're—you're looking great!"

It went all wrong. He'd kept on telling himself all the way down in the train he mustn't make a fool of himself by showing how he felt. There was too much at stake. After all, she was Mac's. He mustn't forget that. Yet, now he was with her face to face, her eyes lit with that sudden joy, he wanted to take her in his arms.

Instead, he told her in short, stumbling sentences why he was here—

"Dad died suddenly. I got two days' leave."

Her face clouded instantly. "Oh, I'm sorry, Russ."

"He came over from New Zealand on business. He must have had a pretty bad trip over. Then he got a chill on top of it. He couldn't have realised he was so bad. He tried to struggle around. Within twelve hours of landing, he was dead. He'd already wired me telling me he'd arrived. I was going to come down to see him this week-end if I could have got leave."

"Oh, Russ!" Her voice was warm and vibrant.

Russ hesitated. It was difficult. "I—I was looking forward"—he began, groping for words, "to having you meet him. He was a grand chap, Ann."

"I would have loved to have met him," she said softly. He was grateful for the warm sincerity of her tone.

"Well, I'm here for two days, Ann," he said, and quickly changed the subject. "Mac's well. He sends you all his love; but you know that. Here—"

He broke off, fumbling in the pockets of his tunic. At last he drew out an envelope.

"Here's a letter from him. He spent the whole of last night writing it I think. It's pretty bulky."

"Thanks." She took it and laid it aside.

"Of course—" He was speaking eagerly now. "Of course, I should like to see you, Ann. I should like you to have dinner with me, perhaps. Mac said—"

She interrupted quietly: "Of course, Russ."

"To-night?"

"Mm."

"Good. I'll meet you somewhere at six. I've got a lot of things to do. The funeral to-day. There's a few things I've got to fix up. I've no other relatives here. My mother is in New Zealand, and my young brother is away in the A.I.F. I've no one else here to see..."

That sad afternoon.

The pitiful little funeral. He hated funerals. It seemed such a poor ending to a grand life. Somehow, the day dragged itself by.

Ann was waiting for him at the appointed place.

"Oh, Russ," she said softly, "you do look so sad and lonely."

He forced a grin. "I've been feeling it, Ann. All alone with my thoughts all afternoon. I've been moping."

They chose to stroll down towards the Quay in search of a quiet cafe. It was about six. The skyline was dense with a tender, reddish haze, deepening into sunset. They seemed unaware of the crowds that milled about them, the tramcar bells clanging in the roaring traffic.

They found a cosy place for dinner. During the meal, Ann never once pried into his thoughts in any of those first silences. She let him have them to himself. And gradually he shook out of it.

The ferry trip. The hollow blast of hoarse, mocking sirens that echoed across the water in ever-diminishing waves.

In the steady throb of the engines they had become comfortably silent. The hollowness within him was gone. Sometimes she chatted in a low voice, almost a murmur. She had a lot of simple philosophy in her, an almost primitive wisdom combined with a delightful sense of humor.

He closed his eyes sometimes and listened intently. He began to think of her so intently that he scarcely heard what she said.

"Oh, but you're not listening," she teased.

"But I am," he told her. "Who said I'm not listening?"

When he took her arm to guide her along the wharf he felt the gentle pressure of her arm against his own.

In the doorway they looked at each other and smiled, and made some funny remark at which they both laughed.

Quite suddenly she was in his arms.

It was a quick, passionate kiss. And when they drew apart, his senses were quaking. It was inevitable, he told himself despairingly. But he said thickly:

"Ann, I'm sorry. That shouldn't have happened."

All the light seemed to have left her face. She scarcely trusted herself to speak. She looked up at him with wide open eyes.

"I know," she murmured presently.

Then she turned from him and pushed the door open. She ran inside.

He walked home that night. All the way over the bridge and back into the city. He needed that. Wanted to be alone to talk aloud to himself. Like a love-sick schoolboy.

The moment he got back to the hotel he felt a desire to ring her, late as it was. He even looked up her number, fingered the pages, and rested his hand on the phone for several seconds.

But he didn't ring her until late the next morning.

"Hello," he greeted. "It's Russ."

The word "Oh" fell like a stone. There was a long pause on the wire. He could hear her waiting at the other end.

At last he ventured—

"Am I going to see you again?"

"I don't know, Russ."

"It's for you to say, Ann."

Night Flight

Continued from page 3

A

ANOTHER pause,

At length she said:

"Perhaps you'd better not. 'All right, Ann.' His words sounded dull and meaningless. He had the idea he was listening to someone else.

Again the utter awkwardness. He wondered if she cared. Or if she were merely offended at his raffishness.

"Ann," he said lamely. "You're not—you don't hate me for it?"

"Of course not." The reserve in her voice annoyed him intensely. Made him feel like a pathetic schoolboy.

"I'm leaving to-night, Ann. My train goes at eleven-thirty."

"Oh, I thought it went at three this afternoon."

"No. The eleven-thirty will get me there in time," he lied. He didn't choose to tell her just now that the eleven-thirty would make him two hours A.W.L. Anyway, it didn't matter.

It was the end of acting. Russ was speaking quickly, entreating her in low, intense tones:

"Ann, let's make a night of it. Let's forget the whole thing and carry on as friends—just as before—as though nothing had happened. Ann, we can't leave it like this. It's—it's like running away from something!"

"That's just what I'm afraid of."

"Ann, please. It may be my last chance."

A pause. At last, she said quietly: "Very well."

Somehow, he filled in that endless day.

He was ready in the lobby almost half an hour early.

Ann came punctually on the stroke of five-thirty. She was suddenly before him. A vision in a wine-colored costume and a kind of twisted ivory turban. Her large eyes seemed more lustrous, her features looked more delicate than usual—and slightly pale and drawn, as though she'd had a tiring day. It made her look—not so pretty, yet, somehow, more—what's the word?

—beautiful.

"Hello!" he greeted jauntily.

"Hello, Russ." Her tone was reserved but pleasant.

"What shall we do? Where shall we go where we can both talk ourselves hoarse? These crowds annoy me."

Ann hesitated.

"We could buy a steak and go home to my flat and eat it."

"Just what the doctor ordered!"

"If you can put up with the nurse's cooking," she reminded.

Russ laughed. "I'll be patient."

After such a terrible pun, the conversation was easier. They both caught the spirit of the meeting and kept up a run of chatter that was desperately maintained. First, they bought a steak. Then the onions—which had to be discussed frankly before the purchase could be made. Then the crumpets.

Ann's flat was a pretty little place, furnished with odd pieces that seemed to match by the merest coincidence. The whole effect was charming. The soft lighting of shaded reading lamps, the generous cushions, the deep-toned felt of the floor coverings were soothing to their jaded nerves.

They gave two hours to the gods of foolishness. Laughing and talking while the meal was being cooked and consumed. With Ann's own delicious blend of coffee to crown the meal. Their chatter came in bursts—became boisterous, then ebbed out like a tide—or a flame fanned by a gust of wind. And when a silence fell, it fell quite naturally. They didn't feel awkward in them.

Ten-thirty. A single mellow chime struck clean into one of those silences.

Russ jumped up.

"I must go," he announced.

That stopped Ann, who was pouring out some more coffee for supper.

"Oh, of course," she said evenly.

"My train, you know, goes in an hour. And with the taxis as scarce as they are on this side of the bridge—"

"Yes, Russ. You mustn't miss it. These last few minutes."

He just wanted to look at her. It was a thrill to be so near her.

It didn't matter what they said. The words were surface. It was the moments themselves that seemed to speak. Like an enchanting melody. He sought her hand, took it warmly.

"This is good-bye, Ann."

"Yes, Russ."

Please turn to page 8

DO YOU KNOW?

KEY THAT PULLED TEETH!

ABOUT THE TIME OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION A DENTAL INSTRUMENT APPEARED IN FRANCE KNOWN AS THE 'KEY'. OLIVER WENDEL HOLMES WRITES: 'THERE NEVER WAS A CLAW ON BIRD OR BEAST THAT WAS THE CAUSE OF SUCH HOWLS OF AGONY AS THAT DIABOLICAL INSTRUMENT KNOWN AS THE 'KEY'. GUARD AGAINST TOOTH-ACHE AND DENTAL DECAY, BY USING KOLYNOS REGULARLY. KOLYNOS CLEANS TEETH SURGICALLY!

LEONARDO DA VINCI WROTE A BOOK ON DENTISTRY

LEONARDO DA VINCI WHO PAINTED THE 'LAST SUPPER' AND INVENTED THE WHEEL BARROW ALSO WROTE A BOOK ON DENTISTRY!

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN TEETH DECAY?

WHEN A SMALL CAVITY APPEARS IN THE ENAMEL THE DECAY EXTENDS TO THE DENTINE, INFECTS THE PULP, THE INFECTION IS CARRIED THROUGH THE BLOOD VESSELS TO DISTANT PARTS OF THE BODY WHILE AN ABSCESS FORMS AT THE ROOT OF THE TOOTH. KOLYNOS KILLS DENTAL DECAY GERMS, LEAVES TEETH GLEAMING WITH NEW LOVELINESS!

KOLYNOS DENTAL CREAM

SMALL CAVITY IN ENAMEL DECAY EXTENDS TO DENTINE INFECTS PULP INFECTION CARRIED THROUGH BLOOD VESSELS TO DISTANT PARTS OF BODY ABSCESS FORMS AT ROOT OF TOOTH

KOLYNOS LASTS TWICE AS LONG AS ORDINARY DENTAL CREAM. HALF AN INCH ON A DRY BRUSH IS PLENTY

DIGGER

You love dogs ...
Well, here's the
grandest dog
story in years.



OF YERONGA

By J. MERRIFIELD

SO at last, they let him in. He was getting old and slow, but he bounded across the sick-room and pressed his wet nose against the big thin hand hanging limply from the bed.

"Digger, old chap. Good dog!"

A long time since he had heard that beloved voice and smelt that particular man-odor that distinguished his master from all other men.

Sometimes, lately, he had crept into the hall where the big raincoat always hung, had pressed his black body against its folds, inhaling the faint clinging scent of his god. But for weeks now the house had been quiet, and he, the trusted friend of years, was excluded from the delights of companionship with the master he loved.

He had waited patiently on the verandah, leaving it but to attend to those canine duties of great importance, to which he was born and bred. For he was a king among sheep-dogs. Old and sometimes tired, perhaps, but still top dog on the big sheep station owned by Adrian Morgan.

The dog's long vigil was now ended and he stood by the sick man's bedside, trembling with ecstasy. The room was full of queer new smells, repulsive to his sensitive nose. Smells, had he but known it, of chloroform and disinfectants.

The man placed a weak hand on the dog's beautiful head, but, instead of the deep ringing tones to which Digger was used, came a strange whisper of sound.

"So long, Digger, old chap."

The dog gazed with puzzled lustrous eyes at the man. He had never before failed to understand, but these words were quite incomprehensible and he whined quietly, his eyes begging his master to be more explicit.

And now someone pulled him across the floor, a strange hand on his silver-studded collar. His claws made little scratching noises of protest on the polished floor. They did not see the dying man raise his hand slightly

in a gesture of protest. Digger had never been treated in this infamous fashion since he was a naughty pup.

Once outside, he snapped at two amiable young dogs who dared to be frivolous at such a time, and retired to his kennel to grieve silently for hours, disdaining the sympathy and friendly overtures of the quiet men.

"The ole dog's takin' it pretty 'ard," said one of the men. "I wonder what the misers 'ull do with him if—"

"Aw, shut up, Bill. Yer depress a man something awful. The boss has been in tougher holes than this. I seen him on Gallipoli. He nearly passed out there. But he lived to make Yeronga what it is to-day."

"He's pretty low now. He must've asked for the ole dog. Well, he always said he was the best dog in Australia, and the ole man didn't throw his words about just to fill up space."

"The best man and dog with sheep in Australia. But they're both finished now."

When everything was over, Mrs. Morgan sold Yeronga station to a stranger and went

to live in Melbourne. Digger went with her. The old lady selected a quiet home in Toorak, with large grounds, so that Digger could have exercise and freedom.

The old dog was vaguely unhappy, but he quickly adjusted himself to his changed conditions and took up his new duties immediately. He made a detailed inspection of the garden and shrubbery, then selected for himself a strategic position on the verandah, from where he condescendingly viewed the doings of his strange city brethren, taking a mild, amused interest in their luxurious useless lives, but refusing to become involved in their absurd affairs.

He welcomed the right people and firmly repulsed the unwanted.

One happy day a visitor from a sheep station, an old friend of his master, called on Mrs. Morgan. He was immaculately attired, but, to the highly sensitive nose of Digger, the man smelt, faintly but unmistakably, of all those common-sense things which gave life real meaning. Sheep, horses, and wide paddocks of sweet-smelling grasses! He crouched at the visitor's feet, while Mrs. Morgan poured tea into delicate china cups.

He dreamt of those grand old days when he had slipped

dexterously around the heaving flock of sheep; when he had scrambled lightly across the tightly-packed backs of those stupid creatures Providence had placed in his especial care. Those exciting days when thousands of people had applauded his strategy in the huge show-ring and his master, a man of few words, had become almost verbose in his praise.

Young and irresponsible dogs he had tutored to obey the stern voice of duty. Defiant rams had been taught that they must do his bidding.

And now he lay, a dreamy old dog, with the delicate tinkle of rare china to bemuse him instead of the soft symphony of a thousand little trotting feet, the many-toned bleating of sheep and the sharp barking of his fellows.

Every day he accompanied old Mrs. Morgan on her constitutional, walking sedately, his plumed tail curled luxuriously over his back, repeating quaintly the motif of the handsome black ostrich feather waving in her elegant Queen-Mary hat. And when they returned home, there was the solemn biscuit rite to be performed between them at tea.

Then Mrs. Morgan left him, too, in the same mysterious manner as had his master.

right to the highway, nor did he stop to eat. A quick drink lapped from the little water available on the roadside sustained him.

Half-way to Geelong he encountered a big mob of sheep. Glorious scents of his old familiar life. A dignified interchange of thought with sheep-dogs who were educated up to his own standards. A delightful interlude on his journey and a happy reassurance that life really existed at its best away from that intolerable place of bricks and concrete.

"That's a good style of a dog, Harry," said one drover to another, "I believe I've seen him somewhere before."

"Yes, you've seen him in a show-ring, too, I'll bet," returned his mate. "I'll have a look at his collar. It's a beauty!"

"Here dog! Here boy!"

Then Digger was off again. He approved highly of both dogs and men, and the encounter had heartened him, but he could not dally, however pleasantly. Now that he had actually seen sheep again and the men and dogs who guarded



The leader of the mongrel pack turned in surprise as Digger rushed towards him.

Before, there had been duties of minor importance to fulfil, to neglect which would have been a breach of trust to that long-absent friend. Now he was necessary to no one. He roamed aimlessly about the grounds, looking for a job. For the first time in his long and useful life, he was unimportant in the scheme of things. He did not belong.

Mrs. Morgan's niece, a young and frivolous bride, came to take him to her home. She was sympathetic and willing to give him a home. "But," to her husband, "where can we possibly put this big old dog in my lovely new flat? He's part of the legacy, you know, my dear." And "my dear" agreed that the domiciling of Digger was certainly a problem.

While they were considering the matter, Digger took matters into his own paws in a direct and simple manner. He decided to return to Yeronga and, if possible, find his old master and report to him the mysterious disappearance of the lovely lady who had been his charge.

That day he left suburbia forever behind them.

The road to Yeronga was long, just on one hundred miles, and the weather was hot. In his day Digger had travelled to Melbourne from Yeronga station and back many times, guiding big flocks of sheep. He knew the road, and if his eyesight was dimming and his old legs stiff, he still had his wonderful nose to lead him home.

He did not deign to notice the strange curs who challenged his

them, it was just canine logic to expect that in this good world his master would be somewhere at the end of that charmed road.

He passed through Geelong, through the suburbs onto the Ballarat road, that historic road where the pioneers struggled with their strange caravans to find the gold of Victoria.

Vast paddocks on either side of the road were enclosed with the thick stone walls peculiar to the district. Blue-grey gum forests formed backgrounds of delicate mystery to the cleared acres. A few crops, a few orchards, but always sheep.

Digger was now twenty-five miles from his old home. He trotted quickly, keeping to the hard road, for sharp grass seeds played havoc with a dog's feet in summer time. Although he was actually wearying with the journey, he felt quite young again, and might have been the original Gay Old Dog himself!

He began to meet canine acquaintances of good standing who came from the passing farms and stations to welcome him home. At Lethbridge he visited a certain little "pub" where his master and he had been known, and paid his respects to the host. He received a surprised welcome from the men about, and was given a large and juicy steak "on the house." He rested there a while, but at night he slipped away again.

Please turn to page 27



I'LL GET the Pictures

**Just a simple assignment
—but it swept the camera-
man into a whirl of
hectic adventure.**

I WAS sitting on my bed that morning wondering whether Old Mother Dally'd stake me for a feed or whether Anne'd manage something when the phone rang.

"Palmer here," I said. My hand was so wobbly on the receiver that I missed the answer the first time. Then I heard Brady's voice at the other end of the wire, and he was saying among other things: "Listen, Palmer; do you want a job?"

I got a firm hold on to the receiver that time.

"Mr. Brady," I said, "you know I do. I want a job so badly I'd—"

"O.K., Palmer," he said. "Now get this. You're to take that two-a-penny box of yours around to Miss Lola Slade—42 The Avenue. Got that?"

"Sure thing, Mr. Brady," I said. "What is it? Homicide?"

I missed his next word though I figured out later it was a cuss word. When I caught up on him again he was saying: "You're to go there and photograph Miss Slade in a swimsuit. Got that?"

"Sure I have, Mr. Brady. But

"When you get the neg bring it round to me. Got that?"

"Sure I have Mr. Brady; but what—"

"That's all," he said.

I got up from the bed and kissed the fly-specked wall-paper. I would have kissed Brady had he been there. I pushed the bell and when Anne appeared I said: "I'll have a couple of eggs and black coffee and two rounds of toast, Anne. And listen, I said, 'make the coffee plus, will you, Anne?'"

"On a tray?" Anne said. "Or would you like a silver service?"

"Listen," I said, "you tell Mother Dally that I've got a job. Tell her I'm working on the Star. Tell her—say, listen, Anne," I said, "you're the world's best-looker. Beats me why you slave for old Dally."

It did beat me, too. Anne's got plenty of what fellows like. She could've been running a beauty parlor just as easy; and she needn't ever've worried whether fellows like me fed or not.

When she came back with a tray, I said: "God bless you, Anne," and kissed her.

Someways Anne's a funny kid. You'd have thought I'd tipped her five shillings at least the way she came all over pink. She said, while I was gulping down the coffee: "Is it true—I mean about the job on the paper?"

"Sure it is, Anne," I said. I looked through the window for a space. "Seems like the sun is shining just for me this morning," I said.

That sort of gave me time to act as if I wasn't a cannibal. I was just going on to tell Anne how good everything tasted when she let out a couple of noises same as if she was laughing and galloped out of the room. I couldn't figure out those noises, save I thought she wasn't laughing.

When I'd finished eating I got my old camera from out of its case and stood her on her legs. She was a bit shaky in one joint, but I patched her with a bit of string. Then I had to sit down for a moment, because I'd remembered I'd got no quarter plates. That knocked me for a while. I couldn't think somehow. I sat on the bed and shoved the scrap of carpet to and fro with the toe of my shoe, until I thought of Sammy Goldberg.

I thought of Goldberg because he'd have quarter plates, and I thought maybe he might loan me some, seeing as how I'd traded my watch and chain and pretty near everything else to him.

I met Anne as I was going to Goldberg's. She was waiting for me downstairs. She gave me something wrapped up in tissue paper. "Good luck—" she whispered.

I could hear old Mother Dally trotting down the passage, so I bolted just in case she asked me again for some rent. When I got down the street a bit, I took a peep at what Anne'd given me. It was a coin, and she'd written on the paper: "Get some cigarettes."

I guess one day I'll buy Anne a fur coat.

Goldberg, I think, has had his counter built especially to rest his mid-section on. That's the first you see of him. Then you see a thick neck, four or five chins and his nose. You don't bother seeing the rest of him. I didn't let on I was flat broke. If a fellow looks like he's in the money, he can bounce a little.

So I said briskly: "I want a box of quarter plates, Mr. Goldberg." And then I added, same as if I was on a homicide assignment: "I've got a job on the Star, Mr. Goldberg, so make it snappy."

"So?" he said.

I could see him sizing up my old camera. Then he looked down his nose and began to buff his nails on his coat.

"You say you're working on the Star?"

"Yes, Mr. Goldberg."

"With a camera like that?"

"Listen, Mr. Goldberg," I said, "she's a good camera. I'll get a better camera later on."

"Why not now?"

"Well," I said, "it's like this."

I thought then that Goldberg had turned me down. But he came back with a flat rectangular object and pushed it across the counter. "That's a good camera," he said.

I'll say it was! It was a German Steiner—a sleek streamlined affair with a light meter and a 2.5 lens. I could have cried when I saw it. Gee! I'd have felt simply marvellous with a camera like that.

Goldberg went on buffing his nails. "You could pay that off, huh?" he said.

"Aw," I said, "that thing's all right. But my old Liz'll do me—"

And all the time I was sickening to own that Steiner.

"I'll take the old junk as a deposit," Goldberg said, "and five bob a week. Fifty weeks and the Steiner's yours."

I picked up the Steiner and felt the weight and balance of it. Who ever had owned it before was a funny guy. I thought: he'd painted the bright steel a dead black. I put it back on the counter same as if I didn't care a hoot for it.

"Five pounds," I said. "All those fancy wheels and trimmings are punk."

"Ten pounds," Goldberg retorted.

"Six pounds," I said.

Goldberg picked up the Steiner and put it on a shelf.

"Eight guineas?" he said over his shoulder.

"Six-ten," I said.

"Not a penny under seven pounds ten. And I give free the box of plates."

"O.K.," I said, "get the papers—"

"Mr. Palmer," he said, same as if he was shocked. "I'll take your word for it."

Maybe I should have been shy of a Steiner at seven-ten; but I wanted it like a kid wants barley-sugar. Anyway, I thought, maybe with a slick camera like that I'd be on easy street. I got a dozen plates with the Steiner. They were only small—maybe an inch and a half square—but gee! with a camera like that, I thought, a fellow could take an ant's portrait just so easy he wouldn't notice it.

I came to Lola Slade's place on The Avenue before I came out of my pipe dream. She had a swell flat on the second floor and a perky little maid to deal with callers. The maid showed me into the lounge when I said: "I'm Palmer, of the Star."

I sat down on one of those bent steel arm-rest chairs, and while I was sorting out the little wheels and gadgets on the Steiner Lola came in. And believe me Lola was a beautiful and expensive treasure. She was as platinum a blonde as a blonde can be without being pure platinum. She wore a chipmunk

"You may go ahead," Lola said haughtily, tossing the coat aside, and I tried to look as if I were a camera artist."



coat over a white swimsuit, and a couple of whopping big diamond rings on her right hand.

"You may go ahead," she said haughtily, tossing the coat aside.

I got up from the chair and tried to look like I was a camera artist; but Lola knew all the answers. That girl taught me more about photography in five minutes than I'd learned in three years—and she



Rennie sprang fiercely to attack Anne's captors.

treated me more like mud than anybody I'd ever contacted.

All I did was to press the shutter a couple of times, and slink round obeying Lola. I photographed her against a pair of black velvet curtains because I understood that a seascape was to be painted in after. You know the sort of thing: yellow sand and blue water, with maybe a couple of seagulls thrown in.

While I was stowing the Steiner away in my pocket I met Lola's boyfriend. That's who I figured he was. The maid poked her head into the lounge and said: "Mr. Warner's here, Miss Slade. Shall I show him in?"

Lola swung a couple of diamond-ringed fingers in my direction. "Show this fellow out first," she said, meaning me.

I passed the Warner guy in the vestibule, and I thought if Lola likes 'em that way it's none of my business. I didn't like him, anyway, his hair and face were too slick for me. I heard Lola say: "Carl—darling!" then I walked down the steps and into the street. I didn't give a hoot for Warner or his lady friend. I took the Steiner out of my pocket and twice I was nearly run over while I fondled it.

Brady is one of those round on all sides fellows. His face is brick-red, and the top of his head is bald and stone-white. But he's sharp as a needle. He spotted the Steiner straight away.

"Looks as if you're toting a real camera, Palmer?"

"Mr. Brady," I said, "it is a camera."

He took the slide and wrote on it, "urgent," before pushing it into the pneumatic tube.

"Where to now?" I said.

"Say," he said, "Listen, Palmer—the reason I sent you to photograph Miss Slade was just that I couldn't spare a man to do advertisement stuff. That's all."

I guess I didn't look so bright after that. I felt sort of empty again. I sat down and looked at the Steiner in my hands.

Brady pushed a chit across his table. "Take that to the cashier," he said. "If there's more coming to you, I'll phone."

I took the chit. It was for one pound eleven and sixpence.

"Mr. Brady," I said, "couldn't I just

Get out," he said.

I went back to Mother Dally's and gave her ten of the shillings I'd earned. Seems like life and people are different if you're on the up and up. Or if the people think so.

Mother Dally said to me: "I'll send up Anne with a little snack. I suppose you'll be wanting better quarters now that you're on the Star."

I said maybe later on I might. I sat on the bed and waited for Anne. And when she came in with a bowl of soup and put the tray down, I grabbed her by the arms.

"Listen, Baby," I said, "you keep your money. What do you think I am?" She started to burton up her mouth, so I said: "All right, I'm only a roughneck, but listen," I said, "I guess I owe you a heap."

"Mr. Palmer," she said, "you don't owe me anything."

"Maybe we think different then," I said. "But I'm asking you—what about you and this fellow going some places?"

"Listen, Mr. Palmer," she came back, "you listen to me. You save your money. You put it in the bank."

"Aw," I said, "what's two three shillings?"

"I'll bank it for you, then," she said.

"No," I said, "I'll get more shillings."

During the afternoon I tried to scrape the black stuff off the Steiner. I'd got it pretty well done when the phone went. It was Brady. He sounded all hot-up and joyful.

Those pictures you took, Palmer.

Well—they're good! And, say—I've got more dough here for you. Seems like you saved the advertiser artist fees. I've got a matter of ten guineas waiting for you. What'll I do—hold it or post it?"

It didn't seem as if I'd ever speak again. I kept on seeing money—money—money—just floating there, waiting to be picked up. And then Brady clicked the phone a couple of times and I yelled, "Hold it!"

When I got round to Brady's office he shook me by the hand and gave me a cigar.

"Palmer," he said, "honest—where did you take those pictures of Lola? I'm asking because 'Gilder-Suits'—that's the advertiser I was telling you about this morning—is thinking of taking a double-spread in the Star, And Palmer—" Brady slapped me on the back same as if he was growing fonder of me every minute.

"I'll tell you what I'll do. If we click on a double-spread, you'll get a ten per cent. comm. How does that sound, huh?"

I said it sounded O.K. to me. I was trying to get out of the fog.

"Well, listen," he said, "where did

coat for five quid odd; and then, further down the street, I spent another three on myself.

When I got home I sneaked in the back door, just so Anne wouldn't spot me. I wanted to surprise her. I got all slicked up, and then I rang the bell.

Well—I said before that Anne's a funny kid. She just stared at me, and her eyes popped in her head. "Rennie," she blubbered, "why did you do it?"

"Do what?" I said.

I couldn't get any sense out of her until I thought maybe she was thinking that I'd robbed a bank. That made me laugh. I said: "Don't you worry none about Uncle Rennie. I haven't done anything that's not on the level."

"I wasn't thinking of that," she said.

I got out one of my new hankies and mopped her eyes. "Look at you," I said, "all mussed up. Seems as if I'll have to go get me some other dame."

I heard Mother Dally calling for Anne then from downstairs. I went out on to the landing and sang out:

"Anne's booked for to-night."

I didn't wait for an answer. I went back to Anne.

"Now, listen," I said, "You get dolled up. You've been O.K. to me in the past—now it's my turn. See?"

"Rennie," she said, "Rennie—" I liked the way she called me "Rennie." It was cute. I thought she was still worrying about the money, so I said: "Forget it. You get a hold of the lipstick. Beat it—"

We went to Delmont's for dinner. We had fried oysters and a porterhouse steak each. Anne looked like a real film star in that fur coat. And she had style. I got to worry-

ing about which way to hold a knife before we'd finished.

"Anne," I said, "You're the world's champion looker. Where'd you learn all them fancy tricks? Anne," I said, "I'm going to buy me some books on culture."

The way that girl smiled! I'd thought I'd seen her mouth before, and her teeth, and everything worth seeing about her. Now I was seeing them all for the first time. I mean seeing them.

"What about a ride on the bus, Anne?" I said. "We'll see some trees, will we?" I said, "And gardens—and—will we, Anne?"

I know I sounded goofy; but that's the way I felt.

"Rennie," she said, "I'd love that." So we got on the bus. Upstairs we went. On the top of the world it seemed to me; and Anne held on to my arm just as if I was her regular fellow. I felt grand and mean, and then grand again.

We pointed out houses to each other. Dandy little places with hollyhocks as tall as me growing in the front gardens. And fellows mowing the lawns same as if they owned the Bank of England.

"It's elegant," I said.

"It's more than that," Anne said softly. "It's home. Rennie, I'm so happy. I could cry—easily—"

But she didn't. She just hung on to my arm tightly, and smiled same as if she was seeing some joke that I couldn't. We got home round about midnight, and Mother Dally met us at the door. Across the street was parked a snaky-looking sedan.

I didn't get much of a peep at it, because Mother Dally was dithering— "There's a lady waiting to see you, Mr. Palmer—" "O.K.," I said.

I didn't get a chance to say good-night to Anne. I was standing in the passage swapping small talk with her, and wishing Old Mother Dally'd buzz-off, when I heard my name called. "Oh, Mr. Palmer— you remember me, don't you?"

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By RENEE FEATHERSTONE

you take those pictures? Did you fake 'em?"

I did some fast thinking. There was something queer somewhere. Maybe, I thought, I'll just go slow till I figure it out. So I said: "Mr. Brady, I'll take the ten guineas now. You go ahead and nail the double-spread—I'll get the pictures."

I could see that he was disappointed. But I hadn't figured out yet where the catch lay. I'd just photographed Lola same as I would anyone else.

I couldn't figure it out, so I forgot it. I felt those nice crisp notes wriggling in my pocket, and everything looked grand to me. I was passing a fur shop when I thought of Anne. I got a swell

Night Flight

Continued from page 4

HE detected a slight catch in her voice. His own throat felt dry and husky.

"Good-bye," he said again, and moved back through the doorway. And after a last, lingering glimpse it closed.

He felt as though a chapter in his life had closed with it. As though some part of him had died. At the head of the stairs he paused. She'd mentioned something about a package or something for Mac. Perhaps he'd better go back. As he approached her door again, his heart was pounding.

He knocked and waited.

After a few seconds, the door opened.

"I came back for—"

His voice trailed off. The sight of Ann, her eyes shining with tears, quickly brushed away, her lips parted with surprise, made him catch his breath.

"Russ," she whispered.

The next moment she was in his arms.

Much had happened since then. In those last six months, things had developed and passed by at a furious rate. Their course curbed by almost a month. The sudden posting to Embarkation Depot. That feverish two days. Then off in a convoy bound for an unknown destination. A last view of the harbor—inappropriately veiled in a mist of rain.

He'd seen Ann again—once—only for an hour. The day before the boat sailed. But the situation was the same.

"I'm confused, Russ. I don't know what to think," she told him unsympathetically. "You see, there's still Mac."

Of course. There was always Mac. His heart echoed it hollowly.

She added: "I don't want to hurt him."

"Of course not. I don't want to, either. You'd better forget me, Ann. Although I'd appreciate a letter occasionally."

"Of course, dear."

It was all so unfinished, so unsatisfactory—so futile, so unfair. But there was no other way out. There had been letters. Many of them. They always came in typewritten envelopes, so that Mac wouldn't recognise the writing.

Like the one that had arrived today.

It had come as a shock. He hadn't expected Ann to ever write the words she had written. The end of it all, she had said. The end of deception. Of typewritten envelopes and empty phrases. His heart stood still as he groped for her meaning. Here it was. She must tell Mac the truth. She had told him the truth. She'd written to tell Mac that she didn't really love him. That she loved his best friend, Russ Condon.

He read it through again, weighing each word for the utmost meaning that Ann had intended. Now that it had come true, he was almost afraid to face it. It seemed unbelievable. Yet here was the letter.

And Mac's. Still unopened, it lay on the top of his locker. Mac was sprawled on his bunk catching up on some sleep. He'd been out on a long sortie during the morning.

The thing had to be faced. Up to this moment, Mac hadn't suspected. Of that, Russ was certain. Mac had never suspected a thing.

It was going to be a shock.

For a few moments Russ was in a panic. For a few moments he would gladly have taken back the whole incident, and never allowed it to happen. But it was too late for that, he told himself. It was too late now.

His friendship with Mac had never been as great as it was at this moment. For months now they had grown to depend on each other with a closer bond than brothers. It had been miraculous how he and Mac had not been split up before this. Incredibly, they had become members of the same R.A.F. bomber squadron in the Middle East.

Mac slept on.

But shortly after five-thirty a bomber roared low over the hulkment area, and he stirred.

Before he could open his eyes, Russ took the letter from the top of the locker and thrust it into the pocket of his tunic. Mac rolled over, yawned prodigiously and rubbed his eyes.

When he saw Russ, he grinned away the remaining fragments of sleep.

"Hallo," he grumbled. "Dinner ready yet?"

"Not quite. Better hurry, though. The C.O. says he's got something special for us in the 'briefing room' at six-thirty."

"Good!" And he ran off to the wash-rooms.

Two hours later, the squadron took off into the reddish desert sky on the long hop to Tripoli.

The bombers roar on.

A sudden voice in the radio telephone:

"Watch your step, sweetheart!"

Russ grins and looks back from the astro hatch. That's Mac on the R.T. Piloting the plane right on his wing-tip.

The bombers roar on.

Long before it seems due the captain's voice comes over the inter-com, startling the crew into instant alertness.

"I think we're coming right on Tripoli now. About four or five miles ahead. That's the harbor all right. Have a look."

Russ sticks his head into the dome of the astro hatch. He looks carefully for a few seconds.

"Yes. That's it, sir!"

There is no mistake. Tripoli is right in front. Right down there below. Its white stone buildings reflect the cold brilliance of the moon.

The bomber squadron swings majestically, deliberately out over the sea.

In the leading plane the rear-gunner cranes his neck for a view, his face tensed, excited. This is his first sortie on active service. The bomb-aimer is having another look at his target map. Then he goes forward.

"I'll follow this curve," the pilot tells him. "It will lead us right into the centre of the harbor. Right there. See the ships?"

"Yes, sir."

The engines are throttled back. The plane begins to bank steeply and drops away in a side-slip, losing height by hundreds of feet. It sends the blood to the ears. That peculiar singing sound of wind rushing past the broad expanse of riveted metal, lashing at the fuselage. The breath-taking lean of the cabin. Another great, wide turn. The bomber straightens out.

Suddenly, the swinging beam of a searchlight catches the aircraft, follows like a spotlight after a pierrette. Heavy ack-ack is spurring up, twinkling in the night. Light flak, red, green, white, rises and aways like lines of bubbles in a champagne glass.

The pilot is suddenly speaking, as calmly as he would ask for a gasper:

"Just below us. There in the harbor. Got 'em?"

"Yes, sir!"

The bomb-aimer is spread full length on the floor of the cabin, poised, eye to the sights.

Ack-ack splutters faster, closer. Colored fountains of flak swing dangerously close. Russ gets excited.

"They're on us, sir!" he yells. "Look out! The bubbly's chasing us!"

"O.K."

The bomber's nose goes down sharply. She swings to port. The spinning harbor rushes up at them. Finally, the rays of the searchlights waver, dip, lag behind. Out of it

now, swinging back over the sea again, low enough to make out the curling crests of foam on the choppy waves—cold, relentless, uninviting. The aircraft climbs for another run as the rear-gunner calls cheerfully:

"They're bouncing along way behind now!"

"Good!"

The pilot throttles back, turns in again. The flak is thicker than ever. A protective wall around the ring of ships anchored in the harbor. The arms of the searchlights waving, scraping, flicking the sky, groping for the elusive bombers.

A succession of bomb bursts.

Thud, thud—thud, thud, thud!

Three of the bombers have unloaded sticks right in among those ships. Two direct hits. Flames shoot up, lighting up the whole scene below.

Thud!

Another bomber drops his load. There is havoc among the ships. Another is set on fire. It bobs about like a stricken tortoise.

The bomb-aimer is on his sights again, hand ready on the release.

"Coming in to it. Port slightly. Bit more. That's it. Steady. Hold it. Bombs gone!"

Yes. They're gone. The sudden lift of the plane. The lightning of the load is noticeable. The great aircraft vibrates. Seconds later, the muffled detonations rumble a couple of thousand feet below.

"Square on it!" the pilot says with the first hint of excitement in his voice.

"Yes! An' she's on fire!" hisses the rear-gunner.

They circle and twist and bounce as flak breaks about them.

"Look out for night fighters!" The pilot warns sharply. His voice is on edge now.

"O.K., sir!" comes simultaneously from both turrets.

Not a second too soon.

Out of the night sky above there comes the rat-tat of machine-gun fire. The flat roar of a diving fighter. But once again the bomber sweeps on across the target. Again the cut-back. The glide to the approach. The dull thump of bursting bombs.

The swift climb from the blazing fury. One of the ships has gone sky high. Another has keeled over and sunk.

"Fighter diving port—"

The rear-gunner's voice cuts into the inter-com, chokes off. Machine-gun fire and cannon shells rip down the fuselage.

The sweeping flight of the bomber is stopped. It lurches violently. The front gun has stopped firing, but the rear-gunner is blazing away.

splutters, cuts out.

A curse hisses into the inter-com, as the pilot tries the controls. Something has gone wrong. The plane is limping badly, slipping to starboard.

A fresh burst of cannon fire catches the bomber, rips down the fuselage. The rear gun is silenced, its young gunner slumping in the turret.

The pilot gives another curse. The engines have cut out altogether. Russ Condon is huddled in the astro hatch, clasping a wounded shoulder. And the plane is falling, spinning, in a steep, helpless dive.

Eight bombers leave Tripoli behind. Thirty miles away the blazing harbor is still discernible. A winking light. A great glow in the sky. The pall of smoke billowing out to sea.

The pilot of the leading plane slumps deep in his upholstered seat and stares listlessly into the ghostly darkness of the water below.

The calamity has happened, Russ goes. It's funny that we think it's never going to happen to us. Russ never did. To think of him as dead and gone was utterly and starkly impossible. You couldn't think of him in any other way than very much alive. Russ was always a real, living person. Vital and charming. Like the night Mac had introduced him to Ann in the hotel lobby. He always seemed to sweep everything before him.

Ann. Yes. He must cable her in the morning. It will be a deep blow to her. She would never forget Russ.

Mac's hand feels inside his heavy sidcot flying suit, gropes for a letter. There will be no need to send this now, he muses, almost reluctantly. The letter he'd written to Ann. The letter he should have written months ago when he'd first made the discovery. Ann and Russ had fallen in love.

Slowly he withdraws the letter from its envelope as if to read its contents under the meagre pilot light on the dashboard. But he knows every word without looking.

Dearest Ann, it reads—

I'm writing this because I know the truth about you and Russ. I can't go on letting you both make this sacrifice on my behalf. After all, dear, it's your happiness that matters most—to Russ and myself.

Tripoli is far behind. The healthy sing-song note of the engines is the only sound. There is little talk in the inter-com. The night is calm.

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The Lovely Lady Doverdale . . .

Lady Doverdale is the wife of the third Baron Doverdale. Terribly busy nowadays with her war work, she says—"I simply haven't time for elaborate beauty treatments. Pond's two Creams fulfil all my skin's needs. They keep it beautifully soft and smooth. Remember! Pond's Cold Cream for cleansing, and Pond's Vanishing Cream as the perfect powder base."



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1.121

FROCKS BY GANNETT

A man in love is seldom logical, and William was no exception to this rule.

LOTS of people made inquiries, many of them vague, but mostly they were what Birch called "boney fidey."

Birch owned the newsagency in the spare window of which appeared a display of models and the "Frocks by Gannett" notice. He got a kick out of telling inquirers that Gannett was not a firm of exclusive southern designers, but one William Moss—his mother's name had been Gannett—an ordinary, nice-looking young man who rented a shop window and workroom from him—and who, incidentally, lodged with him and Mrs. Bennett—Birch's widowed sister—in the dwelling at the rear.

Birch admired Gannett. "I tell you his work's up to that of any of the big names in his line in London or New York," he confided to Mrs. Bennett.

Indeed, William himself would have liked to think so, but for the present he eagerly gave the "big names" due credit.

"Molyneux of London!" he would say ecstatically to Hetty. "What ideas he has!"

Hetty was his adjustable model and upon her inanimate frame he worked out the practical details of his creations. He was a solitary fellow and she got the confidence which, as a normal human being, he was bound to make at times.

She knew that when he had saved enough money he would leave suburbia and set himself up in the city. She knew what his salon would be like and if she had had a mind's eye—which, being headless, she hadn't—she would have seen in it, written across the fine windows in beautiful simplicity: GANNETT.

William was working on Joyce Moody's wedding dress. Joyce was to be married in three weeks, therefore he had none too much time, to get the dress under way. Nevertheless, with only the general idea decided upon, his mind strayed away to Lucy Graham.

She had happened so unexpectedly, and was so perfect that William hadn't dared to hope that she would last. But he had been seeing her every Wednesday night for eight weeks now, and she was so obviously happy in his company that he had begun to dream about that to-be masterpiece of his creative instincts, her wedding dress. It would be of ivory satin cut on the bias. The sleeves would be tight-fitting with a "new" fullness on the shoulders. The neckline . . .

What neckline? That consideration had given him pause yesterday. It did likewise now and William was getting quite deep about it when he remembered that there was no hurry for Lucy's wedding dress, whereas there was a hurry for Joyce's. He must get the bodice details correct before the peace element necessary for concentrated effort departed from the Birch establishment.

This usually occurred at approximately 4 p.m. when Mrs. Bennett began to "fix" dinner, Mrs. Bennett never fixing anything without a quantity of irresponsible slap and dash.

He rose from his finished task at 3.45 and five minutes later Mrs. Bennett let herself loose among the pots, pans, and crockery.

"Why," said William to Hetty as he covered her up for the night, "must some people make a noise about everything? That's what I like about you. It's one of the nicest things about Lucy, too: she doesn't talk too much."

William wasn't much of a talker himself, and it was Lucy who opened the conversation as they walked that evening down the path which

led from her home to Stop 21 where they caught the tram into the city. "My sister brought her fiancé home to see us this evening," she said. "His name's William, too."

"It's a pretty common name."

"I like it."

"Do you?" said William, mastering an overwhelming desire to kick himself. "I like your name. In fact, it's beautiful."

"I was named after my cousin, Lucy Masters. She had a Master of Arts degree and wrote travel books. They used to tell me that I had a reputation to live up to, but when the poor dear was twenty-nine she went eccentric."

"Clever people often do. I knew of a woman who had the most brilliant scholastic career and eventually entered the legal profession. Then she took up the study of anthropology and became so engrossed in the peculiarities of the human race that she got peculiar herself and went off and married a head-hunter."

"Well, a head-hunter would at least have a bit of sparkle," Lucy retorted. "Lucy Masters married a fashion designer."

"A—fashion designer?"

"Yes. He has a wonderful salon in London. They're quite rich. But imagine an intelligent woman marrying a man who spent his days with a dress-maker's dummy!"

Poor William was stunned and for several minutes faithful, headless Hetty darted in points of light across the darkness of his sky.

When he came to, he knew that Lucy had said a foolish thing; he knew that he was angry because of it; he knew that to feel as he did—like a flattened worm—was unmanly, and the logical thing for him to do would have been to proclaim his profession and take what was coming to him courageously and at once.

But a man in love is seldom logical. Whatever else might exist, only one thing matters: to get the girl. And William was no exception. If Lucy knew the truth she would give him up, therefore she mustn't know the truth. That was the extent of his reasoning.

"You've never told me what your job is, Bill."

The skeleton which his decision to keep the truth from Lucy had established in his cupboard made its debut. It gripped him by the throat.

"It's never happened to crop up," he managed to croak.

"I bet I can guess."

"What is it?"

"Commercial artist."

William laughed inanely.

"Well!"

"I'm right, then?"

"How did you guess?"

"I don't know. You look like a commercial artist."

"Do you like that kind of job for a man?"

"Oh, yes. It's masculine and at the same time artistic."

The skeleton retired and William rose from the dust on a wave of relief. By this time they had reached the tram stop and he actually hummed a swing tune as he assisted Lucy into the tram.

Considering that he was now a liar as well as a fashion designer, her trusting presence should have weighed heavily on his spirits but, on the contrary, his double-dealing seemed to give him some of the sparkle of Lucy Masters' head-hunter; a sparkle which persisted as he rode into the city with his love sitting calmly and happily by his side.

They alighted from the tram at the G.P.O., and as they stepped on to the footpath came face to face with Birch.



"You!" Lucy gasped in amazement. **"You make the frocks? You're Gannett?"**

Birch was a hearty fellow. "Caught!" he exclaimed, grinning from one to the other.

William was conscious that his friend's greeting was not in the best taste, but he couldn't help being proud to be "caught" with Lucy.

He introduced them.

"How do you do?" said Birch. "I've had my suspicions about Bill for a long time. We share an establishment, you know."

"Of course. Bill has mentioned you. Your sister keeps house for you both."

"Yes. Two old bachelors . . ."

William was going hot and cold. Birch would say something else now. He would say, "Bill's a fashion designer," or "Bill hires one of my windows to show his frocks."

He cut in desperately in order to prevent anything so horrible.

"Better be getting along, Lucy. Aren't we running late?"

"I don't think so. No. It's only half-past seven."

"What about getting a seat in the cinema?"

"But we decided we'd go and see the coronation painting."

Birch's tram saved a situation productive of those desperate deeds which men in an extremity are driven to commit. Down the street it came, bustling uproariously.

Birch shook hands with Lucy.

"Hope I see you again some time," he said and went.

How to prevent Birch from ever seeing Lucy again was a problem which beset William as he lay in bed that night with the skeleton doing a war dance in the cupboard, and after much consideration he came to the conclusion that, except for alighting from the tram at a spot other than the G.P.O.—from which point Birch always caught his tram—and altering his weekly "date" with Lucy from Wednesday to Thursday so that it would not coincide with Birch's night off, there was nothing much he could do about it.

Please turn to page 10

Frocks by Gannett

Continued from page 9

HE might persuade Birch to grow whiskers, in which disguise Lucy would no doubt pass him anywhere, but apart from the fact that whiskers do not grow overnight and irreparable damage might be done whilst they were still in the stubbly stage, what was the use of Lucy not recognising Birch if Birch recognised Lucy?

There wouldn't be the remotest chance of Birch being persuaded to grow whiskers, anyway.

He realised, of course, that there was no guarantee that anything he might do would have the desired result. The only way that he could be assured that Birch and Lucy would never meet again would be to exterminate them both, therefore he could only do his miserable best and trust that fate, which had sent Birch's tram along that evening, would work for him again—and yet again.

And now William turned to grapple with another problem.

Until an hour ago, the idea of Lucy paying a surprise visit to his workroom had never occurred to him even as a remote possibility. Now it had become a certainty. This, however, could be dealt with. This was the enemy giving battle openly instead of skulking and shooting from ambush. When Lucy visited his workroom she must find a commercial artist, not a fashion designer, and this called for a definite plan.

William formulated that plan before he closed his eyes that night. Before sun-up he was standing in the midst of his workroom surveying it preparatory to action.

It was a nice room with a wide

window opening on to the street. Besides the door which opened into the shop, there was one leading into his bedroom. In one corner was a large press; in another the frame upon which he stretched materials for experiments in hand-painting florals. Hetty stood in the centre of the room and on a table under the window were the sundries—scissors, pins, chalk,

Now these things being the hallmark of his calling, William had decided that, at a given signal—which would be a knock on the door since any knock might herald Lucy—they must disappear. Hetty being the most unwieldy and damaging piece of evidence must go first and the only place where she could be handily and effectually hidden was in his bedroom.

He forthwith set about getting her there and discovered after much thought and manoeuvring that by transferring her from her present position in the centre of the room to one close to the bedroom door, she could be disposed of in three movements. They were: first, open door; second, push Hetty through; third, shut and lock door in one movement.

The sundries were next on the list. They, William had decided, must go into the press. He must keep the press door always open and the sundries close together so that they could be gathered up in one movement. Two steps would take him close enough to the piece of furniture in question to enable him to deposit the sundries therein, after which he could close and lock the door. Now the frame. That

could be easily disposed of. He could keep it permanently in his bedroom and work upon it there. He moved it forthwith, then, back in the workroom, he stood and looked about him.

He saw a press, a table, and a few scraps of material upon the floor. The press and the table could have pertained to any number of trades. The scraps he must be careful about. "Don't throw them on the floor, William," he told himself carefully; "stuff them into your pocket."

Well, he could dispose of the fashion designer all right. Now he must produce the commercial artist. That shouldn't be hard. A few appurtenances dotted about should do the trick.

During the day he made a dash into town for such mediums of commercial artistic expression as show-card ink, drawing-pins, ivory board, etc., and at the first convenient moment took time off from Joyce's wedding-dress to draw, faithfully freehand, the outline of a bath-heater.

WITH his preparations complete, it struck William that the Disposal Act would not in fact be an act at all without time in which to execute it. Therefore, Lucy must be kept outside the door for at least three minutes after knocking, and the only sure way of keeping an ordinary person on an ordinary mission—that was, without the urge or necessity to break it down—outside a door was to lock it.

Therefore William locked his door at once and kept it locked, except when it became necessary to "answer" it, constantly.

This fact came at last to Birch's notice and one day internal influences drove him to remark upon it.

"I suppose it's none of my business, Bill, but I can't help noticing that you're getting into the habit of locking yourself up with your work. You'll go stale, man."

"Got a big job on," William said. "No job's big enough for that."

"It doesn't hurt me. I like it."

"You must—I guess it's no use me talking."

"Not a bit," said William flatly. Birch shrugged.

"I can see one thing sticking out," he said. "The girl-friend is going to have a rival when she marries you. I'll have to drop her a hint. I'll say: 'Lucy, be prepared to share William with one called Hetty.'"

William turned pale.

"Birch! Don't do that."

"Do what?"

"Mention Hetty to Lucy."

Birch stared at him.

"Why not? She isn't flesh and blood, is she?"

William felt he couldn't stand it any longer.

"The fact is," he blurted, "Lucy doesn't like the kind of job I'm doing. She'd rather marry a head-hunter. She thinks that I'm a commercial artist and I want her to keep on thinking it. If you mention Hetty to her you'll have to explain things and she'll know I'm a fashion designer. Whatever you do, Birch, don't mention Hetty to Lucy."

Birch glared, his brow furrowed.

"You mean she'd give you up if she knew you were a fashion designer?"

William nodded.

"But . . . Good Heavens, man! Why don't you tell her where to get off?"

"Birch, we don't want a discussion. I'm confiding in you. I'm asking you."

"Well—all right. Of course I won't tell her anything if that's the way you want it, but . . . she'll have to know sooner or later."

Birch liked William and, feeling for him in his predicament, he went about with a stricken look on his face from midday almost to dinner-time. But one cannot be expected to take the burden of another's troubles upon one's shoulders indefinitely, besides, to-day was his girl-friend's birthday, and her aunt was giving her a party. Of course he was going.

At seven-thirty he boarded a train and, casting a speculative eye upon an attractive girl who sat opposite him, he discovered that it was Lucy Graham.

She recognised him immediately.

"Hello! I thought Wednesday was your night off."

"It is. To-night's extra."

"Your business will be going to rack and ruin, Mr. Birch—or is Bill looking after it for you?"

"No, Bill's getting on with his own job. He's locked in his workroom talking over to-morrow's problems with Hetty."

Birch wasn't the first man to go completely berserk under the influence of a stunning girl who was engaging him in conversation.

Once having realised what he'd said he was in such a condition of fright and remorse that he could have blubbered. "Gosh!" was all his mind could frame. "Oh, gosh!"

Then came the realisation that he had merely mentioned Hetty. He hadn't revealed the fact that she was a dressmaker's model.

Perhaps Lucy hadn't noticed his remark anyway. She gave no sign of it. In that case he had better take a hold of himself because if his appearance even suggested the extent of his feelings she would notice something.

"Mr. Moss must have some very pressing problems," Lucy said sweetly.

"Oh, yes." (What was William supposed to be?—He remembered.) "Yes, he has problems all right. You know—lines to draw without a ruler. Saucepans to sketch so that they look like saucepans. The right expressions to put on faces."

"I can imagine."

"It takes some thinking out."

Lucy nodded and Birch grinned and fiddled with his tie.

"Mr. Moss lives with you, doesn't he?"

"Yes."

"Two old bachelors with your sister to keep house for you."

"Yes, that's it."

"What's your sister's name again? I remember it was a very pretty name."

"Janet."

"Birch couldn't remember having mentioned it. Still . . ."

"Janet. Oh, yes—I daresay Mr. Moss has relatives visit him sometimes."

"No. He hasn't any relatives—at least not in this State."

There was a little silence, then Lucy smiled and said:

"Have I met Hetty?"

Birch, who had come round nicely, went off again. He grinned stupidly.

"Well—I don't know. Have you?"

"I don't think so. No, I'm sure I haven't. She's Mrs. Moss' model, I suppose."

"MODEL!" Birch piped frantically. "Oh, no. Bill hasn't got a model. Hetty's a—well—a lady assistant. What would Bill be doing with a model?"

"It is questionable, isn't it? But what artists are supposed to do with models is draw them."

Birch stared blankly. (Model, fool! Living model, she means, not a dressmaker's dummy!) He rallied.

"Of course, but . . ."

"A commercial artist wouldn't need a permanent model, would he? Is Hetty an artist, too?"

"Yes, she's an artist. She does the finishing off. Jobs like drawing toes on feet. Smoke coming out of chimneys. Stripes on zebras. That sort of thing."

"Interesting work."

"I'd loathe it."

"Not if you had the girl-friend sitting just across the desk all day."

Birch began to smile, but stopped half-way.

"Lucy—Miss Graham, I hope you're not misunderstanding about Hetty. She's a valuable assistant and there really isn't anything more to it. She's just like a—rubber or a—bottle of Indian ink to Bill, and Bill's nothing more than a—drawing-board to her. They think of nothing else but drawing."

"Indeed? You don't really expect me to believe that!"

"Please, Miss Graham, Bill . . ."

"Yes, you'd stick up for him. A man's always right in a man's eyes."

Then Birch lost control of himself in sudden end-of-the-jether rage.

"I'm not sticking up for him. I think William Moss is the dumbest fool that ever wore socks. If I were him I'd get rid of the creature before she got me into any more trouble, even if I had to pay someone to dispose of the body."

Lucy bent horrified eyes upon him.

"Mr. Birch! You murderer! Excuse me. My station."

Birch felt the jolting of the train as it drew to a standstill; a rush of wind as the door opened and was closed again with the customary ear-splitting bang. Then he was alone.

After due consideration, Birch decided that in all fairness he must tell Bill all. He sought out his friend, and plunged into a confession.

"Bill, I saw Lucy Monday night. I don't know what the devil possessed me, but I mentioned Hetty. I didn't tell her she was a dummy," he hastened to explain. "Lucy doesn't know you're a fashion designer—but things are pretty foul."

Please turn to page 11

THE DOCTOR'S DIARY

This diagnosis applies to you if you are subject to Rheumatism — Backache Muscular Pains High Blood Pressure

Doctor (Examining Patient): "This pain in your back. Just what do you feel?"

Patient: "Sometimes it's a steady ache; other times a series of stabbing pains a little on one side."

Doctor: "You say your shoulders ache, also your arms and legs?"

Patient: "Yes, I've had that for a long time."

Doctor: "Do you find it an effort to get up after stooping?"

Patient: "Yes, Doctor. My legs get cramped and stiff when I stoop or bend for any time."

Doctor: "Do you find your joints creak when bending or walking up steps?"

Patient: "Yes, it feels as if the bones in my ankles are grinding together."

Doctor: "Do you find it necessary to get out of bed during the night?"

Patient: "Yes, I do. Lately it disturbs me more frequently."

Doctor: "When you wake up in the morning, are your eyes puffed and puffy?"

Patient: "Yes, Doctor. I've noticed that it is getting more pronounced, too."

Doctor: "You don't want to become a chronic invalid, crippled with rheumatism or arthritis—useless to yourself and a nuisance to everyone else. You have been neglecting your health for some time, and now your kidneys are not doing their work of filtering out the poisons from your blood."

Patient: "I suppose that accounts for the pain and stiffness in my limbs and shoulders?"

Doctor: "Partly. It also accounts for the pains you get in the back and for having to get up during the night."

If you suffer from Rheumatism, Kidney Troubles, High Blood Pressure, Flashes to Neck and Face, Backache, or Bladder troubles, get a flask of Dr. Mackenzie's Menboids from your Chemist or Store. A pure herbal remedy. Menboids can only do you good and can be taken safely by even the most delicate patient.

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That letter makes you realise De Witt's Antacid Powder is indeed the stuff to relieve digestive troubles. In many cases one dose puts paid to after-meal pains, and never again will you be afraid to eat just what you fancy.

De Witt's Antacid Powder gives quick relief because it neutralises excess acid, the cause of stomach pains. It soothes and protects the stomach lining. Finally, it helps to digest your food. Thousands say there is "nothing better in the world for indigestion." Prove this for yourself.

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For Indigestion, Acid Stomach, Heartburn, Flatulence and Gastritis. Obtainable from all chemists in large sky-blue canisters, price 2/6.

Frocks by Gannett

Continued from page 10

At the word "Hetty" William had looked around him as wildly as if he were Bluebeard caught in the chamber of horrors itself. Birch's assurance that Lucy was still in ignorance of the true nature of his profession calmed him, however, and now he said:

"How foul?"
"She thinks you're a bad lot."
"A bad lot?"
"Yes. You see, she started asking questions about Hetty and the more I tried to get out of it the deeper I got in. She thinks that Hetty is a woman and that you're carrying on."

"Oh," said William faintly.
"I had to let her think it because I couldn't tell her the truth. She wouldn't believe that you weren't carrying on. I'm afraid," Birch finished, "that it's all up."

William didn't say anything, he just flopped into a chair.

"She doesn't know I'm a fashion designer."

"No, but . . ."

"She doesn't know I'm a fashion designer."

That fact seemed to comfort William enormously. It seemed, too, to make any further explanation or apology on Birch's part unnecessary.

"What are you going to do?" he asked.

William shrugged.

"It's what she's going to do, I'll know to-night."

There were holes in the majority of the walls and partitions of the Birch establishment. Some of them Birch had bored for his own convenience—for instance, the one in the partition between the shop and the dining-room which enabled him to keep an eye on the shop whilst he ate—and the rest seemed to have broken out in sympathy. There was a comparatively large one in the partition between the sleeping apartments of William and Birch respectively, and close to William's pillow.

On the night following Birch's confession, William came home very late. He didn't want to speak to anyone and undressed quietly, but as he crept into bed a voice came sepulchral through the hole.

"What happened?"
"IT."

"You got the air?"

"Yes. She met me at the gate. Said she had a bad head and was going straight to bed. She can't come out with me next week. Otherwise engaged. Said she'll be otherwise engaged every night of the week in future."

"She didn't say why?"

"No. I didn't ask her. What was the use?"

"Well, do you know what I think about it?" Birch hissed with his mouth obviously framing the hole. "I think that you haven't lost much. What difference should a man's job make to a girl if she liked him?"

"She doesn't like fashion designers," William said stubbornly.

There was a pause, then Birch said:

"You haven't thought of giving the designing up, I suppose?"

William rose slowly in his bed. Give up his profession!—No, he hadn't thought about that.

He did think about it now, long and deeply while Birch waited in silence on the other side of the partition. Then:

"You're supposed to be a commercial artist, why don't you be one?"

"Because one can't just be anything," William answered firmly. "It takes years. Anyway, what would be the use of pretending? Whatever job I was doing I'd still be a fashion designer."

Birch didn't answer that because he really did see what William meant and he had nothing to say to it.

Presently, however, his voice came through the hole in a perfect torrent of anxiety.

"You said that you didn't go out with Lucy to-night, didn't you?"

"I did."

"It's nearly two o'clock. Where have you been since you left her?"

"Walking."

"Bill, you're not thinking of doing anything, are you?"

"Doing what?"

"Well, gun—rope—river—brown bottle. You know."

"No," said William disgustedly.

"All right. I had to ask you, otherwise I'd have been afraid to open my eyes in the morning in case I saw a farewell letter poked under my door."

"There won't be any letters—and if you don't mind, Birch, I'd appreciate it if, from now on, we consider the subject of Lucy and me closed."

"I'm sure I'd appreciate it. I deserve to have it thrown up at me for the rest of my life. It's all my fault."

"No. You were right. It would have happened sooner or later."

"It's happened sooner."

"The subject's closed. Good-night, Birch."

"Good-night, Bill, old chap. It's all my fault."

"Good-night."

Dropping off into troubled sleep, William told himself he wouldn't need to pretend any more, that was one thing. Lucy would not be coming with "sweet curiosity"—as he used to think about it—to visit him at work. The Disposal Act was history.

NEXT morning, he proceeded to put it among the archives. He took the sundries from the press and put them in the most convenient places, irrespective of their position with regard to the press. He closed the press door. He moved his frame with its stretch of patterned fabric back to its corner.

He placed Hetty where the light fell best upon her, which was five feet from the bedroom door instead of two. (Three feet was the maximum run she could take at a push.)

The drawing materials which he had kept in a pile at the end of the table ready to be naturally and quickly distributed he took up and flung on top of the press.

Then he filled his mouth with pins, and with a swathe of muslin and the sketch of his design he took his place in front of Hetty to begin upon the creation of a "best" frock for Mrs. Bennett.

But one does not force oneself to wake out of a pleasant dream merely because it is a dream. One holds on to it. Therefore, while he designed for Mrs. Bennett's ample figure, William thought; "Satin for Lucy. . . A Juliet cap of seed pearls to hold the lace veil. True-lovers' knots of seed pearls, too, upon the train. . ."

Mrs. Bennett was in the shop—Birch had gone to market—and she turned from a nifty dusting operation to attend to a young woman who was entering.

Now Mrs. Bennett never said to a customer: "Good morning" or "What can I do for you?" She simply raised her chin and eyebrows simultaneously and smiled. It was quite effective, however.

"I've been looking at the frocks in the window," said the young woman in an awestruck voice. "How did you get such beautiful models out here? I've seen nothing like them in the city."

"You will some day, my dear," Mrs. Bennett said proudly. "Is there any special one you want to see?"

"I like the lemon linen. I am wondering if you have a similar design, only in blue. Of course, the frocks are all models but. . ."

"You're agents for Gannett, I presume."

"Oh, no. We share the premises with him. You just see Mr. Gannett himself. He'll be able to fix you up with any color or design you want."

"Mr. Gannett! He's here?"

"Yes. That's his door. Just knock."

"Oh. . . Thank you."

When William heard the knock he took the pins out of his mouth and put his coat on. When he opened the door. . .

He was aware of Lucy standing in the doorway. Then he was aware of himself standing facing her with his tape measure like a lei around his neck. He was aware of Hetty, swathed in the background; of the

sundries; the frame; the drawing materials which were not there. He was aware of everything in a material array more potent than a parade of Shakespeare's most ghostly ghosts.

"You!" Lucy gasped.

"Yes, me," said William's white dumbness. "Me."

"You make the frocks? You're Gannett?"

Then suddenly something happened to William. The color rushed back to his face. He wasn't frightened any more. He didn't feel apologetic or despicable. He was furiously angry. Angry at a lot of things, but mostly with himself.

"No, I don't make the frocks," he said roundly. "I design them. Choose the materials; see that they're made properly. These are all my goods; sketch of a frock; scissors, pins, needles, etc. I am hand-painting the design on the frame. On the floor you see threads and scraps of material, and in the press are such nubby-pamby things as dress-hangers and lavender sachets."

"I'm definitely not a commercial artist. I am not, as a popular saying would have it, a commercial artist's bootlace. I'm a fashion designer. I spend my days with a dressmaker's dummy, and, what's more, I intend to go on spending my days with a dressmaker's dummy. There she is: Hetty. . ."

"Hetty!"

"Yes. . ."

"That's Hetty?"

"Yes. . ."

"Why did Mr. Birch tell me she was a woman?"

"He didn't. You presumed she was a woman, and he couldn't tell you the truth because I'd made him promise he wouldn't let you know that I was a fashion designer."

"But why?"

"Why? Don't you remember? Imagine an intelligent woman marrying a man who spent his days with a dressmaker's dummy!"

EMOTION choked him, then he went on fiercely. "I was fool enough to care. Well, I don't care now. I don't care if you prefer a head-hunter to a fashion designer. I don't care if you can't bear fashion designers. Maybe there are things about people that I can't bear, too."

After that there was a profound silence. William stood looking at Lucy, his hair standing erect through the frequent passage of agitated fingers; the inch-tape, wound round and round his neck through the same urgency, threatening to choke him. For a moment she said not a word, but just stood looking at him.

Then her eyes filled with tears. . .

"You must be a clever man, Mr. Gannett," she said shakily, "but you weren't clever enough to know when a fool of a girl was talking through her hat. What did I know about fashion designers? I got an infantile idea into my head, and it dropped out of my mouth at the first opportunity. Your work is beautiful. There'd be something wrong with me if I couldn't appreciate a person who could do a thing—like that."

William stared. Was it really happening? Lucy in tears and talking like that? Nodding towards the chiffon, painted with its bright red poppies, stretched upon the frame?

Then he did something which, under ordinary circumstances, he wouldn't have got around to in months. He stepped up to Lucy and took her in his arms.

"I've designed your wedding dress," he whispered.

"Bill!"

"Hm. Will you wear it at my wedding?"

She nodded, her tear-wet eyes smiling happily up at him.

"Pearls," thought William. "Lovers' knots of pearls. . ."

Hetty grunted with satisfaction as, through no apparent cause, she slid down her notches from five feet five to five feet one and a half.

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WHY MURDER MR. RUNDEL

BY RAY WEBSTER

THE charwoman found him and she didn't keep it quiet. Far from it. She nearly screamed her head off, and was just on the point of swearing that she'd never touch another drop, not her, when the caretaker arrived and quietened her simply and effectively by throwing cold water over her. Then he pushed her dripping form to one side and looked into the room.

The sun was shining through the bars of the venetian blind, making parallel lines of light across the furniture. The electric light was glowing palely. The floor was littered with odd scraps of paper, screwed-up envelopes, and string, left over from the previous day's work. A big wastepaper basket had tipped over and spilt its contents.

An old typewriter ribbon had rolled under the table, making drunken curves and twists. An uncovered typewriter stood on the light oak desk and seated in the chair drawn up to it was Mr. Rundel. His head was down on his chest as though he were asleep, and one

hand lay on a pile of correspondence paper.

The caretaker shook his head. "Mr. Rundel! Mr. Rundel! Wake up. It's morning!" he cried.

There was no response. The old man did not even seem to be breathing. The caretaker took his hand, thinking contact would do the trick. Mr. Rundel's hand was cold—too cold. He dropped it and stepped back, nearly falling over Mrs. Bonner, who had watched proceedings with nervous interest.

"Struth!" he whispered. "He's a gonner."

There was a piercing scream and Mrs. Bonner made a dive for the door. She tripped over her own bucket which she had left in the passage and somersaulted down the three steps to the street. There she sat and screamed and screamed again.

Constable Sam rounded the corner and quickened his steps as Mrs. Bonner's vocal efforts caught his ear.

She was sobbing then. "Oh, my pore 'eart! It didn't oughter 'appen to me. Mr. Rundel dying all over

his typewriter and leaving the light on and that caretaker—"

"Mr. Rundel? Dead? When? And what's this about the caretaker?"

"You can ask 'im. In there."

Constable Sam picked up her bucket and hurried to the entrance. He met the caretaker coming out.

"What's this about Mr. Rundel being dead?" he asked.

"True enough, Constable. Must have had a heart attack or something. He's just sitting at the desk as though he got tired working and went to sleep."

"Did you ring for a doctor?"

"Yes. I rang his typist, too. She's coming round."

"Good work." Constable Sam was pleased. He got called in to see a dead man, the caretaker rang his typist, and she was coming round, and, incidentally, she was the constable's girl-friend. Well, well.

He went inside and looked round, but didn't touch anything. It didn't seem a big concern. The furniture wasn't much. His eyes strayed to the still figure at the desk,

and he was thinking that the dead man looked as if he'd been surprised at something when he heard someone enter the room. It was the doctor, and he seemed in a hurry.

He'd been half-way through his breakfast. He nodded to Sam and the caretaker and went across to the still body in the chair. He felt for a non-existent pulse and examined the eyes of the dead man. His head wobbled and fell at a strange angle.

"There's something wrong here. He didn't die in his sleep—his neck's broken. Done by a professional, too," the doctor said.

Sam gasped. "You mean he was murdered?"

"Now, Constable. Do people generally sit down at a desk, leave the light on, break their own necks, and then wait for someone to find them?"

"Well," said Sam. "Well—" Then he reached for the phone and put in a call to headquarters.

Mr. Rundel's office was overrun when Kay Denning, his typist, arrived in response to the caretaker's phone call. One man was going through the desk, another was blowing white powder on the typewriter, and Symington Sam was sitting on the floor going through the wastepaper basket.

"Kay," he cried, and scrambled to his feet.

"Yes, Kay. What do you think you're doing, going through my boss' things like this? It's none of your business."

The door of the inner office opened and there stood a bald little man with a big nose. They called him Casual Thommas, but it was remarkable the number of cases he had cleared up.

"Ah. You Miss Denning? Just come in here for a moment, will you?"

The fat little man put forward a chair for Kay, and then sat down opposite her.

"Miss Denning, you were Mr. Rundel's typist, weren't you?"

"You seem to know me, but I don't know you and don't understand why you are questioning me like this," Kay was roused.

"Really now. My name is Thommas. I'm an investigator from the C.I.D."

Briskly, he went on: "Miss Denning, evidently you are unaware of certain facts. Some time between 8 o'clock last night and 3 this morning Mr. Rundel was—er—murdered."

"Mr. Rundel murdered? But who—? Why he was the kindest, most gentle old chap you could find anywhere."

"Exactly. That's why I wanted to have a talk to you."

"Mr. Rundel was murdered by a jiu-jitsu expert, according to the doctor. The only finger-prints we have so far are Mr. Rundel's and, we presume, yours. Nothing has been disarranged that we can see. We found the keys of the safe in the old boy's pocket and I'd like you to go through the things and see if anything is missing. We are checking up on his visitors. The caretaker has been most helpful. Seems to think the chap who did the deed was in to see Mr. Rundel a couple of times yesterday."

Kay looked incredulous. "Mr. Phipps? But he has been Mr. Rundel's friend since they were boys. More likely the caretaker did it and wants to move suspicion."

Mr. Thommas looked at her keenly

for a minute, then pushed a heap of papers across to her.

"Just go through those, will you?"

"Good," said Kay, but her hands trembled as she went through the neat little bundles. Mr. Thommas watched her face as she worked, looking for the slightest change of expression which would give her away. Kay finished counting the change in the cash box.

"All here."

The detective grunted. "You are quite sure he didn't keep any valuables here, or even had them with him last night?"

"I can't swear to it—he was not in the habit of discussing his private affairs with me. But when I left last night everything was just as it is now."

There was a knock at the door and Constable Sam peered round at them.

"Excuse me, Sergeant, I found this in the typewriter." He held out a small corner of paper.

Kay's heart gave a jump. She felt that nothing could hurt her while Sam was near.

Sam was speaking. "Yes. It was caught under the roller affair. Looks as if someone tore a sheet of paper out of the machine in a hurry and this bit got left behind."

"Good man. Perhaps he was typing when the murderer came in and that particular page was unhealthy. Sam, I want you to do a bit of checking up. And I want to see the caretaker again, and Mrs. Bonner. The caretaker first. Miss Denning, you had better go and get lunch somewhere."

Sam held the door open for her.

"Sorry, darling. Wait for me," he whispered as she went out.

As she walked out of the office with Sam a few minutes later Kay asked:

"Sam, who could have done that to him, and why?"

"Don't ask me, Kay. So far we haven't found a trace of anything except that bit of paper in the typewriter. There is no apparent motive. People don't go running round killing harmless old men just for the fun of it. By Jove! I suppose he wasn't indulging in a bit of blackmail? Why was he working last night?"

"Don't be ridiculous. Why should he want to blackmail anyone? He was probably busy with his book."

"What book?"

"He has a notebook that lives with him. He puts down all sorts of funny things in it. It was falling to bits, so I suggested he type it on loose sheets and arrange them alphabetically. He was a tidy old boy. Here's my cafe, Sam."

"Listen, Kay. Meet me to-night and we'll go to the pictures. It's been upsetting for you, I know, and I do want to see you. Right? I'll see you then. Bye, darling."

When Kay got back, the office was reverberating under the protests of Mrs. Bonner. She was standing in the middle of the room and Mr. Thommas was leaning against the wall looking helpless.

"A disgrace and a scandal, that's what it is," she was storming. "Who done it, anyway? All you men and you haven't found out who did away with the old gent."

"Now, Mrs. Bonner, just a minute. We only want to get to the bottom of this. Just you tell us what happened this morning. Right from the beginning."

Please turn to page 19



LITTLE ALFIE

**"Go out and make some money,"
said Ivy — and trouble began
because Alfie took her literally.**

IF you were looking for Little Alfie, you'd start off at the Bonanza Billiard Saloon, and if he wasn't there you'd just keep going down Simpson Street till you came to Riley's pub. He'd be a certainty to be there, propping up the wall with his shoulder-blades and talking horses.

Personally, though, I'd reckon you were a bit light in the head to be looking for Alfie unless he happened to owe you a couple of bob, because he's by no means an oil-painting, and if you don't follow the gee-gees his conversation isn't so hot either.

He's what they call an "urter," which means he's one of those jokers that never have a cracker of their own to bet with, but who go round passing on the "good thing" to anyone that's got time to listen to them.

He gets talking to some mug punter, sez' and after a while he puts over a big spiel about a roughie that's going to be worked in the last race on Saturday. Or maybe, he'll say he knows the boy that's riding the favorite, or the bloke that sweeps out the stables, or something.

I've got to admit that, as urters go, Alfie wasn't too bad, and after he'd worked on them for a spell most of the suckers would have a go at beating the books with his tips.

If they had a win they'd come good with a percentage for Alfie, and if they slipped, well, he'd make himself hard to catch. He used to say that urging is the only really legitimate business where a feller doesn't have to own a piece of the Commonwealth Bank before he can start operating.

Just the same, if I were a betting man I'd have half a quid to say that all Alfie ever knew about horses would go on the back of a tote ticket and leave plenty of advertising space, but he certainly looked the part. He was a sawn-off little cove, about the general build of one of the Seven Dwarfs, that's been on the eighteen-day diet, and if you didn't know the game I daresay you'd take him for a jockey. He always wore one of those double-breasted waistcoats that leave a couple of inches of shirt bulging out above the top of a man's pants. Well, I told you he was no oil-painting.

Still, he used to get along all right, and he didn't seem to have a care in the world until one day, when he was minding his own business and not doing a scrap of harm to anyone, he fell in love.

Ivy, her name was. I never heard the rest of it, but she worked behind the perfume counter in one of those big city department stores. She'd be about two or three pounds over the lightweight limit, I'd say, and she stood a head taller than Alfie. It's hard to say what she looked like originally, but after she'd dyed her hair, plucked her eyebrows, and duced her finger-nails she was, well, sort of striking. Alfie told me she was the Ginger Rogers type, and not being much of a film fan I had to take his word for it.

To look at, this Ivy was as hard-boiled as an eight-minute egg, but it turns out that she had ideas about settling down in a place of her own, with a few chooks and kids and things running around. She wasn't going to finish up with fallen arches from standing behind a blinking counter, she reckoned. That was where Alfie put it over his rivals. He was dinkum, he wanted to marry her.

The only catch was that he'd never been known to have more than a couple of quid in his life, and Ivy finally woke up to the fact that unless she could break down his prejudice against working for a living she wouldn't be any better than a fifty-to-one shot for the orange blossom and the sweet music.

She told him there was no future in urging, and she asked him why he didn't get himself one of those jobs where you cop a pay envelope every Friday. Alfie said he didn't think he'd be any good at working on account of not having had any experience at it. He reckoned that a man has to be born with the knack of it.

But in the end she got the better of him, and he promised to have a go at it. He started up in a small way, running a book on Scotchman's Hill, outside the trots, but it seems the whole business was crippled right from the jump-off for want of a bit of capital. It was crook luck all right. You see, the favorite came up in each of the first four divisions, and by the time the fifth started Alfie could see that unless a miracle happened he was due to take the knock.

Maybe it was close season for miracles or something, but just as the field is making the leg turn with the favorite five lengths out in front, Alfie suddenly remembers an important engagement uptown.

You've got to strain your eyes pretty hard to see the finishes from the hill, and with the mob all watching the horses he got the best part of a furlong start before the punters woke up. They say he galloped the first mile in a time that made Phur Lap look like a hack, and though he shook off the punters the shock to his nervous system was considerable, and he lost his enthusiasm for business life.

Well, things got terribly quiet around the city that winter, and even fellers that were willing to work were finding it tough going, so you can imagine how Little Alfie got on.

Ivy stuck it out as long as she could, because, for some queer reason, she thought the world of the little chap. You and me, if we won him in a raffle, would put him back in the hat and ask for another draw, but dames are a bit screwy like that. Still, at last she told him that unless he came good, and got himself some work, she wasn't going to be a final acceptor for the Matrimonial Stakes.

She said a feller who just sat around, and let Fate put the boots in, wasn't her idea of a Prince Charming, and that a bloke who couldn't find the price of a hamburger two days running would be a big help when it came to supporting a wife and a couple of kids.

"Do you think that Gary Cooper or Robert Taylor, or any of them, would just sit there doing nothing?" she said. "Ar, be a man, Alfie," she slung off at him, "show me you're not just a drone . . . go out and make some money."

Well, naturally, poor old Alfie couldn't make head or tail of this kind of talk. It was a problem that needed figuring out by experts, and so he finally wandered round to consult Brick McGovern, because Brick is a bloke that's got all the brains about the place, and, apart from being able to make a deck of cards practically sit up and beg, he's well known as a feller that's all the time using his head.

Brick listened to Alfie's tale of woe with a grin on his face. "Well, Alfie," he said, "if you really want to make money you've struck the right man because I've just taken

handing any bouquets to the Johns, but you've got to admit that it doesn't take them long to wake up to any funny business that's going on in the district.

One day Alfie was parked outside Riley's pub blossoming like a flowering gum when a shadow suddenly blacked out the morning sunshine. He didn't have to turn round; his sort can sense a copper at fifty feet, and he knew this was one of those plain-clothes demons that go around attacking their noses into other people's business, especially funny business.

"Hi yer, sport?" Alfie muttered out of the corner of his mouth. "I'm fine, thanks," said Sergeant Graham. "Cripes, Alfie, I didn't know you at first, fair dinkum. What've you done, won Tatts, or something?"

His tone was easy and friendly, but Alfie knew he had to watch his step. He flicked his cigarette butt carefully into the gutter before he answered:

"No such luck, Sarge, but I been pickin' the card pretty right the last few Saturdays."

The detective grinned. "Well, it's nice work if you can get it . . . no long, Alfie, I'll be seeing you."

"Not if I see you first," Alfie growled, under his breath, but, as it happened, they met again the next day.

Graham strolled into their cellar just as they were working on a big job. Brick, who was always a cool sort of bird, just wiped his hands on his apron and murmured: "Well, well . . . look who's here."

You know, I've never been one for



Alfie got so smart the cops started turning round to take a second look at him.

Graham ran a professional eye over the plant and the whole set-up. "You know, Brick," he said, "the people down at the Mint are getting terribly sensitive about all this competition you blokes are giving them." He picked up a note, turning it over thoughtfully. "Not bad stuff, either, if you don't look too hard. What sort of a story are you going to tell the Judge this time?"

Brick smiled faintly. "I'll give

him the one about the three bears, it's a honey if you tell it right."

It turned out that the Judge had heard about the three bears, and Alfie and Brick sort of went out of circulation for a while. Eighteen months, to be exact. There were big headlines in the papers about it all, and some of the girls at the store went around with their noses in the air whenever Ivy was near, but she stuck by Alfie just the same, time?"

Please turn to page 14

By KIRWAN WARD

it up as a hobby, and you can be in it if you like."

They got down to work, and they made money all right. It wasn't as good as the stuff you get from the banks, but of course Brick and Alfie didn't have the influence behind them that the banks have, but it wasn't too bad if you didn't start holding it up against the light looking for watermarks. Anyway, business was good, and if it hadn't been for the awkward questions that Ivy kept asking everything would have been okay.

Alfie bought himself one of those blue hats with a feather in it like the college boys wear, and some black-and-white shoes. You could see he was in the money. Maybe that was where he slipped, because, after a while, the cops started turning round to take a second look at him, and they got to wondering where all the prosperity was coming from.

You know, I've never been one for

I'll Get the Pictures

Continued from page 7

I TURNED round and saw the expensive treasure. "Sure," I said, "sure I do, Miss Slade."

"I'm so glad you're back, Mr. Palmer," she cooed. She caught hold of my hand and fondled it a couple of times. I could see Anne looking at Lola same as if she was poisoning; but I couldn't disentangle Lola's hand.

Old Mother Daily said with a sort of smirk: "Go into the parlor, Mr. Palmer; it's quite private there."

Then she took hold of Anne's arm, and Lola lunged me into the parlor.

We sat on the sofa, and Lola still had her hand attached to mine. She was an elegant baby all right, but too expensive for me. "Mr. Palmer," she said, "pardon this late visit; but I just had to see you."

"Sure," I said. But I couldn't figure out just why at one time I was mud in Lola's eyes, and the next a fellow worth seeing.

"It's those photographs you took, Mr. Palmer," she said. "One was published in the Star to-night."

"Geel!" I said.

"Mr. Palmer," she said, goo-gooing up at me, "would you be very offended if I said I didn't like that picture—and that I'd like the negatives back?"

"Geel!" I said, "that's tough. I don't know—"

"I'll pay for them," she jumped in, "say twenty-five pounds for them both."

"Twenty-five quid?" I said. "You mean twenty-five!"

I guess I must have looked a pretty dumb fish, for she said quickly: "That's not all, Mr. Palmer. Just think for a moment. I'll pay a hundred pounds for that camera of yours and all the plates you've got. Think of it, Mr. Palmer. One hundred pounds. Does that sound good?"

Well—it sounded so good that I decided it was screwy. I asked myself what for and why. I said: "A hundred quid is sure a stack of dough, Miss Slade; but . . . I hung on that hedging 'but' purposefully. I had a hunch she might unload a reason for her offer."

She never did, but she came out with: "I'll make it two hundred—and no questions asked!" That last bit was a murmur on Lola's part, and I think she knew it as soon as she saw me bitten up.

"I'll sleep on it," I said. "Thanks for looking me up."

"Listen—" she said.

"Not to-night," I said.

"Why, you big gorilla," she spat out. "I'll have the cops on you."

I got up and held the door open. "Nighty-night, Lola," I said. Geel! I'll say that baby gave me a poisonous look. She galloped across the road to the snaky sedan, and I heard the screech of the tyres as she lit out up the street.

I walked upstairs to my room and tried to figure out why I'd suddenly got the spotlight. I took the Steiner

out of my pocket and looked at it. It was a swell camera all right, but not worth two hundred quid. I laid the Steiner down on the bed. I couldn't figure it out.

I was standing there on the carpet, trying to ease down the fog in my brain, when Anne knocked at the door. "Rennie?" she called softly. "Rennie—are you there, Rennie?"

"Listen, Rennie," she said, when I let her in, "there's a couple of fellows downstairs. I said you'd gone to bed—but they . . ."

"Cops?" I said.

"I don't know—listen, Rennie . . ." She stood there shaking. She was scared stiff.

"Anne," I said, "it's nothing. They've got nothing on me—nothing at all. I'll see these fellows. You just go count sheep—I'll look her by the arm and we went downstairs. Maybe I felt sort of shaky myself; but I didn't let on to Anne."

I walked into the parlor same as if I was used to cops seeing me at one o'clock in the morning. I got a good look at them before we started in. One was dressed in tuxedo and white tie. He was a good-looking fellow, but tired round the eyes. The other was a tough-looking, bull-necked fellow with outside boots.

Bullneck tried to bounce me as soon as I came in. "You Palmer?" he yelled at me. But the tuxedo fellow soothed him down by saying: "Take it easy, Rawlings."

Then he said to me: "Mr. Palmer—you are a Canadian, are you not?"

"What if I am?" I said.

"To-day," he said, same as if he knew all about me, "you photographed a young woman and gave the plates to a certain newspaper. Is that correct?"

"You telling or asking me?" I said.

The Rawlings fellow came to life and shouted: "Answer yes or no, and come across the parlor same as if he was going to bust me one. But he didn't. He eased up when the tuxedo fellow stepped between us."

"Let him come," I said. "If he thinks he's good enough to take me apart he's welcome to try."

The Rawlings fellow got going again. "Listen," he pleaded, "let me handle this gorilla, Mr. Tate. Just let me—"

"No," Tate said. He turned to me then and said: "Mr. Palmer—we're here on serious business; and I think you'd be wise to answer our questions honestly."

"O.K.," I said. "Let me begin. Who are you?"

Tate suddenly grinned. "Fair enough," he said. He indicated

Rawlings. "My impetuous friend is Inspector Rawlings. And I—well, people call me Mr. Tate."

I had a feeling that Tate was on the level, so I said: "O.K.—your turn—Mr. Tate!"

"First," he said, "what camera do you use?"

"A Steiner."

"Have you always used a Steiner?"

"No—"

"When did you get the Steiner?"

"This morning."

"Where?"

"Goldberg's mont-de-piote."

"Got a receipt?"

"No," I said. "Goldberg—I was going to say that Goldberg and me had a 'gentleman's agreement,' but it sounded too screwy, so I said: 'I didn't think it necessary.'"

"Did you get plates with the camera?"

"A dozen," I said. "Two I gave to Brady. Four I've got in the camera, and the other six are still in the box—"

"I'd like to see them. The Steiner, too."

"O.K.," I said. I was moving towards the door when Rawlings said quickly: "And we'll come with you."

We went upstairs to my room, and just as soon as I saw the window wide and the curtains flapping, I had a hunch there'd be no Steiner and no plates. I had to hand it to

Rennie thought it an easy job, but before it ended he was caught in a web of mystery

the Rawlings fellow. He was sure quick on sizing things up.

"Seems like we've been beaten to it," he said.

I sat on the bed and tried to grin, same as if I hadn't got an empty feeling in the solar-plexus. Tate and Rawlings were whispering over by the window. Then Rawlings came over to me and said: "Got any ideas, Palmer?"

"No," I said. But I was thinking that maybe Lola might have shinned up the fire-escape.

"Anybody else interested in your pictures?"

"Brady," I said.

Tate laughed. "I think we can omit Brady," he said.

"Besides Brady?" Rawlings asked.

I did a quick think. It seemed to me that Tate and Rawlings were a couple of jumps ahead of me. So I said, same as if I was dead in the nut: "Maybe you don't realise I'm on the rocks without a camera."

Rawlings started to say something, but Tate stopped him. They had a bit of an argument, then Tate came back to me and said: "Did you develop those plates, yourself—I mean the ones you gave to Brady?"

"Brady had it done," I said.

"So that when you saw the reproduction in the paper to-night, it was for the first time?"

"I didn't see the paper."

"Take a look at it then."

He handed me a copy of the Star folded so as to be open at a double-column ad. It was my picture of Lola all right, and it was a swell portrait of her. In the background was some sort of ship—and the way it looked, it was just as if Lola was stepping through the hull.

"What do you think of it?" Tate asked.

"Elegant," I said. And then I was suddenly remembering Brady saying as how I'd saved artist fees. I came out of the fog. "Geel!" I said. "Looks like a photo on a photo—"

"What about it?"

"Why—the fellow who owned the Steiner before me could answer that better than me," I said.

"Exactly. But who was he?"

"Maybe," I said, "the same fellow that's got it now. And maybe," I said, "Goldberg would have that fellow's phone number—"

"Mumma's bright boy!" Rawlings said. "Tell me, bright boy—why should the fellow who owned the camera first put it into sack with Goldberg, and then want it back so badly he can't wait to knock on the door?"

I couldn't face up to that one, so

I said: "Looks as if Goldberg knows all the answers. Why'n't you see him?"

They had another confab in the corner, and then Tate said: "Thank you, Mr. Palmer; I think that's all." I was showing them into the street, when he added: "Perhaps you've got ideas of your own, Mr. Palmer. If you have they're worth cash. Ring me any time X triple O. Good night."

The Rawlings fellow mumbled something and I closed the door. I waited till I heard the noise of their car starting up, then I went upstairs again. When I walked into the room, I saw Anne sitting on the bed.

"Angel," I said, "I'm always glad to see you. But Angel," I said, "why aren't you counting sheep? Didn't I tell you?"

We stood looking at each other. Anne was in her kimono. She was trying to hide one little bare foot behind the other.

"Rennie," she said, "they were policemen, weren't they?"

"Rawlings was," I said. "I don't know about the Tate fellow."

"What did they want?"

"The Steiner—" I said. I was beginning to feel sunk again. I was thinking of Anne and me riding on the bus, and looking at houses, and her hanging on to my arm; I was thinking that maybe all that was just a goofy pipe dream, when Anne suddenly lugs the Steiner and plates from out of her kimono, and hands them to me.

"There," she said. "Now you hide them somewhere." She let out a funny little giggle just to show what a tough little wretch she was. "I staged it all, Rennie," she giggled. "I made it look as if you'd been robbed."

I guess I was registering every feeling I had, for she closed down on the giggle suddenly, same as if I'd slapped her. "Rennie," she said, "Rennie—what have I done?"

"Angel," I said. "What have you done? Jimmy cricket! You've got me so as I think I'm full of moonshine; you've got me so I can't think of anything save wanting to kiss your feet—"

"Ape—" she said.

"But Angel," I said, "I've got work to do—"

"Work?" she said. That made her open her eyes. "Now—at two o'clock in the morning!"

"Work," I said. "I'm going to play a hunch. You gave it to me, Angel—you and Lola—"

I had a sudden feeling that my mention of Lola wasn't for the best, because Anne stared at me, same as if she'd got a zip-fastener on her mouth. "Aw listen, Anne—" I said.

She went out and closed the door, and just when I thought she'd gone for kemp, she opened it again, and said: "Good night, Rennie—" and I heard her go softly down the stairs.

When I couldn't bear her footsteps any more, I set the Steiner on top of the wardrobe, facing the window. Then I fastened two strips of brags so as, when the window was opened another inch, they'd contact. You see I figured that what Anne had pretended to do, and what Tate and Rawlings had suspected, might really happen. I thought that some sneak thief might shim up the fire-escape and pay me a visit.

Now I wanted to meet that fellow. I thought that maybe if I could get a line on him, I might figure out where all the loose money lay, and that some of the puzzle might click together. When I'd got everything set, I was so played out that my brain wouldn't oscillate, so I lay down on the bed in the dark room, thinking that would help.

But I got to thinking of Anne instead; and of how, suddenly, she was meaning an awful lot to me. I thought of the dinky little houses with the hollyhocks, and of the fellows shoving mowers over the lawns. I thought of Anne popping something to eat into my room when I was flat broke without letting on to Old Mother Daily. And I thought of her giving me money to buy smokes . . .

Then I thought that the house was on fire. The room was full of smoke and I heard someone doing

A Letter from Home

When you're sitting in your dugout with your chin upon your hand,
And your thoughts are ever
fitting to that golden, far-
off land,
When the dusty wind is blowing,
and all is grit and sand,
What's the thing that bucks
you up and makes you feel
just grand?

A letter from home.

When air battles are raging
and all is noise and din,
And you're feeling tired and
dusty, and just about all in,
Your hand goes to your pocket,
gropes, and finds the thing
you seek.

And you read it over once
again, though you've had it
for a week.

That letter from home.

When the air is full of Stukas,
and the bombs are dropping
fast,
And the "ack-ack" guns are
blazing and the Spitfires
roaring past,
And the Navy's guns are
booming out, bombarding
from the sea,
When you reach the base
you're heading for, you
wonder if there'll be
A letter from home.

So don't forget to write to
him, he loves to hear the
news,
And it's sure to cheer him up,
and drive away those blues,
It's better far than any leave
he's likely to obtain,
Please do remember, get your
pen, and write him once
again—
A letter from home.

—Helen Rose Munro.

the big apple down the fire-escape. I got up off the bed feeling pretty punk; but after a while I soothed myself down, thinking that maybe going to sleep didn't matter so much, because I'd got the fellow's portrait.

You see, I'd connected the brass plates on the window with a battery and a sash-lift bulb—just in case something slipped. I got out my tank, and while the plate was developing I sat on the bed. But I couldn't sit still. I felt as if I'd swallowed a couple of hamburgers without chewing them.

I was wondering who the slick guy was that had paid me a visit; and I was wondering about the rest of the picture on the plate. When I took it out of the tank my hands were wobbling; but she was developed all right. I took a wet bromide print of her just as she was.

I didn't know the guy at all. He was mean looking, with a thin, pasty face, black hair, and a wart spilling one side of his nose. He had something in his hand that looked like a fly-swoot. The rest of the picture was nothing but window and curtains . . .

In the morning I rang Lola. I said: "Listen, Miss Slade—what are you offering for Steiners this morning?" I could hear her sucking in her breath, so I knew I'd caught her on the hop. "This is the gorilla," I said, "you remember the gorilla, don't you, Miss Slade?"

Then I heard a man's voice cutting in. "Palmer," he said, "get this. Leave Miss Slade alone, else something unpleasant will happen to you."

"Yeah?" I said. "Like it nearly did last night. Well, listen a moment, brother," I said. "Miss Slade offered two hundred quid for something—does that offer still hold good?"

I heard Lola laugh, same as if her head was pretty close to the phone. Then the fellow that's speaking for her said: "Palmer—you're plain nuts."

"O.K.," I said. "I was just wondering."

I hung up and rang the bell for Anne. When she came in I said: "Listen, Angel—why'd you fake that robbery last night?"

"Rennie," she came back, "why'd you buy me a fur coat?"

"Well—" I said. "But that don't answer my question."

"Listen, Rennie," she said, "why did that Slade girl offer you two hundred pounds for your camera?"

"Pussy-footing, were you?" I said.

Please turn to page 15

Little Alfie

Continued from page 13

IT just shows what a mug a man is to try to guess what goes on in a woman's head. I'd always figured that Ivy was the type to dump a bloke quick and lively as soon as he got himself into any sort of jam, but I was dead wrong there. She reckoned it was partly her fault, because she'd told Alfie to make some money, and she said you couldn't blame him if he took it a bit too literally.

Summer came and went, and was followed by a long, dragging winter, miserable as toothache, and then, one day when even the department store seemed a pretty cheerful sort of dump, Little Alfie walked in. You'd hardly have recognised him. He'd put on about a stone, and his face was kind of brown and healthy-looking.

A black shirt, a pair of dungarees, and a pair of hands grimed with work.

Ivy let out a yell like a Red Indian hitting the warpath, and the way she hugged him you'd have thought he was this bloke, Gary What-his-name, the big film star.

"Geel," she said to see you again, Alfie, she looks him over from his dungarees to his grimy hands, "and you've got yourself a job?"

"Yeah," says Alfie, sort of off-hand, but his eyes were kind of

shining with the new self-respect that he'd got from somewhere.

"They learned me a trade down there . . . oxy-welding . . . hard yakra, but the money's all right," he said.

They went into another long clinch, just as if they were on a desert island instead of in the middle of a busy department store.

They say all the world loves a lover, but you wouldn't have thought so if you could have seen the snaky look in the shopwalker's eye as he galloped up.

"You're fired," he yelled at Ivy.

I doubt if she heard him because, by this time, the pair of them are marching, arm-in-arm, out into the sunshine.

The girls in the store were still twittering like a flock of gals when Sergeant Graham came in an hour later. They nudged one another as he walked down the aisles, and some kids who'd been hanging round the lolly counter made a snappy exit.

The shopwalker spots him and hurries up. "What can I do for you, sergeant?"

The sergeant gives a big grin. "You can get me a couple of boxes of confetti," he says, "and make it as quick as you like . . . a clobber of mine is getting spliced to-day, and I don't want to be late for the wedding."

(Copyright)

I'll Get the Pictures

Continued from page 14

BUT Anne was following her own line. "Why were Tate and Rawlings so anxious to get it, too?"

"Listen, Angel," I said, "you're going so fast you don't answer my questions. But let it pass. Let me guess. Was it because you thought Uncle Rennie was in a spot of trouble?"

"Oh, Rennie," she said impatiently, "don't be so dumb. Of course it was!"

"All right," I said. "Now you listen to me for a moment. I don't give a hoot for this Lola Slade. I'm interested in getting one of those dinky little houses we were looking at last night; so I'm asking you right now, Angel—will you marry me?"

"Ape," she said, sort of half-crying, "of course I will."

So now, I thought, I've got two to look after. I rang X triple O and asked for Mr. Tate. When I got on to him I said: "Palmer here—and I've got ideas."

"Good," he said. "I thought you might get some."

"Mr. Tate," I said, "another fellow tried to bust into my room last night. I took a flashlight of him. What'll I do with it?"

"Come round and see me," he said. "Eighteen Sycamore Avenue. Bring the flashlight, and the Steiner and plates."

So I knew then that Tate was a pretty slick guy. I went downstairs and sang out for Anne. "Angel," I said, "just you put this camera and box of plates some place where nobody knows. And listen," I said, kissing her, "do you still love me?"

When I got to Tate's place, I had everything pretty well worked out. Tate lived in one of those fancy houses with a portico, and four or five fluted columns shoved in as extras.

There was another fellow talking to Tate when I walked into the library. I couldn't place him, though I was pretty sure I'd seen him somewhere. He was introduced to me as "Mr. Smith," so I knew he was in cahoots with Tate.

Tate said: "Well—have you brought the outfit?"

"Mr. Tate," I said, "First let me say this: I think you're on the level. But," I said, "I've got to see about my sweetie and me. There's a story sniping around. Now I want that story because it means money to me; it means I'm sitting on top of the world."

Smith sighed, same as if he was fed up to the gills. But I didn't care. I reckoned I was sitting pretty.

At last Tate said: "Well, Simon, what do you suggest?"

It came to me like a flash then, who this "Smith" was. He was a big shot with a diploma like an alphabet following his name. I guess I was looking pretty sick, for Tate said: "All right, Palmer, you'll get your story—subject to a little censoring."

So I started in. I told them about me being beat broke and how I came to get the Steiner and plates. Tate chipped in then.

"About Goldberg," he said. "Rawlings and I saw him. He denied he'd sold you the camera or the plates. We believed you, however, because we knew that Goldberg had got wind of a squad raid—that's why he was dumping his 'fence' stuff for anything he could get for it."

I told them about Lola then, how she'd treated me like mud, and later like a fellow worth knowing, and finally given me the go by. "Lola," I said, "offered me two hundred quid for the Steiner and plates; but she switched this morning and told me I was nuts. How come?"

That beat Tate. He said: "I can't place this Slade girl. She might have genuinely objected to the photographs at the beginning, and later got huffy because you raked her off. But that doesn't account for her wanting to purchase the camera—"

I showed him the flashlight I'd taken. "Maybe," I said, "this fellow could tell us something."

Tate got one peep at the flashlight and grunted "Hal" same as if something had clicked with him. He turned to Smith and showed him the print. "Points to Renaw, I think, Simon—"



"All right, Palmer, you'll get your story, subject to a little censorship," Tate said.

"Undoubtedly," Smith nodded, "that's Lemil all right."

Tate came back to me and said: "Well, Palmer, you've been honest with us, so here's part of the story you want. Renaw and Lemil are working in collaboration. They are espionage agents. We know that, but we want proof. The fact that Lemil went to Brady first—Brady could give no description of him, because Lemil rang him on the telephone to find out your name and address—and the fact that he went after you last night prove that he was in some way interested in, or connected with, the original photographs."

Tate grinned. "You were lucky, by the way, inasmuch that your flashlight must have given him a dickens of a fright. Anyhow, we think that Renaw took those illegal photographs and for some reason—possibly caution—left them undeveloped. Later they were stolen from him, and found their way to Goldberg, from whom you purchased them in the belief that they were unused."

"That's why we want those plates especially. We won't worry about the camera for the time being. You say Miss Slade offered you two hundred pounds—well—He glanced across at Smith. "How about it, Simon?"

Smith nodded his head, same as if two hundred quid was mere pigeon feed. "I have no more," he said, "that consolidated revenue will stand the strain."

So here I was sitting again on the top of the world. When I drifted up through the quids, Tate was saying: "The point is, Simon, we want Renaw and Lemil as much as we want the plates—"

"That's so," agreed Smith. "But

obviously our next step is to question this Slade woman . . ."

I could hear a bell ringing somewhere in the house, then Rawlings came into the library. He slung a couple of grins at me, so I knew that him and me were going to be like two woolly lambs.

"Goldberg made a statement this morning," he recited, same as if he was in the witness-box. "Goldberg admitted the Steiner was brought to him by Tubby Olsen. I got on to Olsen, and Olsen admitted that he'd stolen the camera and plates from a flat at Marlowe Mansions. I went round to Marlowe Mansions. I found that the flat had been rented to a person named Fletcher. I have not yet succeeded in tracing Fletcher . . ."

RAWLINGS

scratched his head, same as if he was human again, and said: "Maybe Fletcher is someone we know—goodness knows."

"Yes," said Tate smiling, "it might even be Carl Renaw."

"Carl?" I said. I was thinking suddenly of the Warner fellow, and Lola saying, "Carl—datling." "Say," I said, "this Renaw—is he a slick-looking fellow with ears like a mule, and a gold tooth one side of his mouth?"

"That's Renaw," Rawlings said quickly.

"OK," I said. "Maybe he gets his name back to front now and then. Anyway," I said, "I know this fellow's phone number—" Rawlings let out a yelp, but I said: "Listen—I've got to move skippy. I've got to get my camera and see Brady; I've got to tell him—"

"Oh, no," said Rawlings, "you're stopping right here, bright boy."

"Mr. Tate," I came back. "I've got my sweetie to think of, haven't I? I've got to think about me getting a good job, haven't I—?"

"You certainly have," he agreed. "But not just now."

"Listen," I said, "I know where this Renaw fellow is. You don't—"

I could see that Rawlings was going to forget me and him were lambs, so I pushed a couple of chairs over, just to hold him back for a moment. I was feeling pretty mean, but I kept on thinking of what was best for me and Anne. I did a hundred yards in pretty sick time, then I flagged a taxi. We beat Rawlings to Mother Dally's by fifty yards.

I sang out for Anne as I galloped up the stairs. She didn't answer and I saw why when I busted into my room.

I saw she was strapped to my bed and Warner and the fellow with the wart on his nose were holding lighted matches to her bare feet. I saw they'd tied a towel round her mouth to gag her screams. I saw the lost look in her eyes same as if she wasn't seeing anything, but feeling only one big awful pain.

I saw all that in a split second, then I hit Warner so hard I felt the bones in his jaw crack. Lemil pulled a gun on me and something whopped me in the shoulder. I heard Rawlings somewhere behind me let out a howl same as if he was going to enjoy himself. Then I didn't hear any more because Lemil "fly-swatted" me.

First I hear Rawlings' voice, and he was saying: "Dead? Not him! You can't kill gorillas as easy as that—" Then I heard Anne crying: "Rennie—Rennie—"

So I sat up same as if I didn't have one big headache, and a punk shoulder. "Angel," I said, "what are you crying for?"

She kept on laughing and crying, so I had to begin practising cuddling with one arm.

"Palmer," Rawlings said after a while, "that's a wonderful little girl of yours. Lemil was hiding downstairs when you gave her the Steiner to plant—but she never let out a peep where she'd hidden it—"

"So?" I came back humbly. "Ain't I the bright boy, Angel? Haven't I the brains of a silkworm?"

"Rennie," she said. "I don't care if you have."

So I knew then for certain that Anne loved me.

Rawlings said: "I suppose you know you broke Renaw's jaw? I suppose you know Lemil plugged you in the shoulder, and that he's sorry now he did it—"

"Go away, Rawlings," I said.

"I suppose you know," he grinned, "that Brady's nuts on you—or don't you?"

"Rawlings," I said, "you make me tired."

Later on, when I'd got my shoulder strapped up, Brady rang up. "Listen, Palmer," he said, same as if I was a fellow worth knowing, "do you want a job?"

"Mr. Brady," I said, "you know—"

"OK, Palmer. Now get this. You come round and sign this contract."

"Well, that's tough," I said. "I've got my signing arm in a sling."

"The other one'll do," he came back.

And then Angel took the phone and said cheekily: "We can't now—we're going for a ride on the bus."

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Humor from battle stations

Tall stories carry a grin to the folks back home

"AUSTRALIAN soldiers always grin when they are attacking," a German General said in a broadcast recently.

Whether it is a grin or the set face of determination the General may not know, but letters from the troops reveal that laughter and the tall stories for which the Australian soldier is famous carry them through all the hardships and grime of war and waiting for war. Here are letters filled with laughter and some even taller stories than usual selected for "Letters from our Boys."

Sapper B. Dean at an advanced Allied base to his sister, Mrs. Sheldrick, 242 Glenhenty Rd., Elwood, Vic.:

"WE had some fun the other day when a Papuan native, a young chap about 18 years, Maywa, called in to request the usual bit of 'tobak' and ki-ki (food).

"We managed to give a little that we could spare, and so delighted was he that he gave us a couple of native dances with the accompaniment of a tom-tom drum.

"The dances were most weird to watch. He started off plucking a branch of leaves which he arranged somehow in his thick, black, curly crop of hair.

"Then crouching on the ground almost bent double, he started thumping the drum.

"He would do a sort of sliding, skating movement in his bare feet, and then suddenly jump or hop sideways, probably taking off the actions of a wallaby.

"My gosh, he had us in fits, and his jittering effort was the best.

"He thought it great fun when a couple of the boys joined in with him. Can you imagine them all prancing around like a lot of emus?

"He singled me out for special attention later, and said he would be my 'brother'.

"The boys thought it a great joke, and laughed like mad. He wanted to know where I lived in Australia, and said he would call in to see me after I got back.

"One of the 'wags' produced an old paper with a picture of Parliament House, and told him I lived there.

"I had to write him a sort of 'passport' with my name and address. He was quite serious about it. Of course, I had to keep up the joke to please him, he pestered me that much, and it's a great joke among all the chaps at present, me and my adopted 'black brother'.

"I had given him an old discarded pair of running shoes, and probably this may have won his affections."

Pte. Don Beardsley to his mother, Mrs. S. G. Beardsley, Lansdowne St., Merrylands, N.S.W.:

"THIS week I've seen Sonja Henie in 'A Star Was Born.' To-night I've sat it out the third time, or, should I say, 'laid out,' because our reserved seats were up on the hill under a nice patch of bamboos surrounded on three sides by rocks, with a blanket under us.

"These theatres are much better than the old type you have in Sydney.

"First, you don't buy tickets. Second, you can't lose your ticket. Third, there are no chukkers-out, and—well, this should improve things a bit—there are no girls to lean on your shoulder and spill ice-cream over your nicely-pressed suit."

Bdr. A. W. Hollingworth somewhere in Australia to his wife in Ivanhoe, Vic.:

"WEVE got our new mess hut finished now. Gee! we had some fun building it without nails.

"We lashed all the poles together and nailed the iron with pieces of wire, cut about two inches long.

"We've got a table in it with seats. We've also made a good fireplace inside, and it's really good, I tell you.

"We've got a new rule, too. No swearing during meal hours!

"If you swear you pay a penny per word; the money goes to buy extra butter or sauce or any extras we might need.

"We counted up to-day, in two days 17/8—not bad, eh? The idea is not to stop the boys from swearing, but to get funds for the section!

"One chap waltzed in, read the rules, and straight away put 11/1 in the tin. That entitles him to swear 133 times."

Sapper W. J. Box at an advanced Allied base to Arthur Scott, Godfrey St., Toowoomba, Qld.:

"THAT croc story was a fable, but the shark races are fair dinkum.

"The idea is to get one of the divers to catch a shark for you. You are armed with a stick, to which is attached a piece of meat.

"We then mount our sharks. As soon as they are let go we dangle the meat in front of the shark and away we go.

"I had very bad luck during the novice race last time.

"I was away out in front at the 50-mile turn when my mount developed a cramp in the left fin. Consequently we could only turn left-hand corners.

"So I finished up away out to sea, and had to be picked up by the umpires."

Pte. M. O'Regan, somewhere in Australia, to Miss B. Hill, 45 Probert St., Camperdown, N.S.W.:

"THERE are crocodiles not far from here and, according to the bush wireless, they are of enormous size.

"One day one particular croc, being annoyed, stood up on his hind legs and blotted out the sun for fully twenty minutes like a total eclipse until the machine-gun section shot it.

"The crash was heard for miles around, and the billabong in which we used to swim is now non-existent where this monster fell."

Driver N. C. Chittick in the Middle East to his wife in Avoca, N.S.W.:

"THERE are some big grasshoppers about, too. I saw one this morning that someone had chained up with a dog chain, and wasn't he tugging at it, too!"

THE letters you receive from your menfolk in the fighting services will interest and comfort the relatives of other soldiers, sailors, and airmen.

For each letter or extract from a letter published on this page The Australian Women's Weekly forwards payment at £1. For briefer extracts a payment of 5/- will be made.



MEMBERS of an outpost fighter platoon at a northern base.



OFFICERS' WATER POLO TEAM at a northern base. L. to R.: Capt. Fraser, Lieuts. Smith, Page, Cury, Silcox, Yates. Sent in by Mrs. G. Hogan, Katoomba.

Driver Chivell at an advanced Allied base to his wife in Bunde St., Murray Park, S.A.:

"A FEW of us boys were in our tent yarnning, and we heard a noise like a baby crying.

"So we went out to see, with torches, and guess what we found? A tiny baby goat, not a foot high.

"How the poor little blighter got here goodness knows; anyway, we brought him in and then began to wonder what we could feed him on. We had some powdered milk, so we mixed that.

"He is now in a kerosene box alongside the sergeant's bed to spend the night.

"We named him Harry. I suppose he will eat our socks and clothes if we keep him until he grows up."

Pte. J. W. Rolfe somewhere in Australia to V. Rolfe, 29 Deakin St., Mitcham, Vic.:

"THE flies here are so big that if you let more than two in the tent you can't move, while if the ants crawl up on the tent it just caves in.

"We catch the ants and train them to carry our kitbags."

A soldier somewhere in Australia to his cousin, Miss Dorothy Murrell, 23 MacTier St., Narrabeen, N.S.W.:

"A COUPLE of the boys had been on the 'spree' and our lieutenant caught them with two bottles of wine in the tent.

"He immediately put them on mess duty for a week.

"The first night, when setting the officers' tables, they gave the lieutenant a huge carving fork, an ancient, rusty carving knife, and the largest spoon in the camp—one used for stirring porridge.

"He was as wild as a bull and immediately gave them an extra week's fatigue.

"They retaliated by giving him a baby's eating set the next night—tiny fork, spoon, and pusher!"

L.-Corp. R. J. White somewhere in Australia to his son, R. White, 36 Arinya St., Kingsgrove, N.S.W.:

"A CHAP heard the following conversation between two mossies: 'No. 1 Mossy said: 'Will we take them along?'—meaning the boys.

"No. 2 said: 'No! What is the use? The big ones will only take them off us when we get home'—meaning down at the swamp."

A sergeant in the Middle East to his mother in Bellevue Hill, N.S.W.:

"WE had some British soldiers quartered with us for a few weeks. One was an English concert singer. We had never heard of him, but his mates were always telling us of his fame.

"Mac decided to give a concert in his honor, the tenor to be the leading artist.

"Perhaps the boys were shy of performing before a professional singer, but for some reason Mac could not obtain vocalists.

"At length young Jerry, a coltish lad from the Monaro, called out: 'Put my name down, Mac, I'll sing you a song.'

"We all marvelled, for none of us had ever heard Jerry sing so much as a stave. However, his example incited others, and soon Mac had a full programme.

"The concert dragged at the start and it looked as if the affair would be a flop. Mac was looking worried. The tenor's first item, a classical gem, was not appreciated, vocal gymnastics not being in our line.

"Came Jerry's number. His choice, 'Take Me Back to Old Virginia,' was more to our taste. Jerry beamed it out and we all joined in at the end of each verse.

"The rendering of the song had better be treated like the dead and spoken kindly of, for it was a lamentable performance.

"At the conclusion, Mac rose. 'Thanks, Jerry, old man,' he said. 'You can't sing, but, lad, you're dead willing.'

"That broke the ice. We yelled and cat-called until both Mac and

Jerry must have been tired of bowing.

"Then the pro, obliged with a couple of popular favorites, and the concert proved a huge success. Again an Aussie had saved the day."

Pte. R. Hampton to B. Hampton, Glenfarne St., Bexley, N.S.W.:

"WE found through careful research that the mosquito likes certain blood groups better than others.

"On hearing this, one of the boys tried something out. He crossed out his blood group and put 'anaemic,' and from then on we have been enjoying peaceful nights much to the annoyance of the mosquitoes."

Sgt. D. R. Mackenzie somewhere in Australia to his wife in Lord's Place, Orange, N.S.W.:

"SOME of the boys went bush and brought back a bunyip. Of course there was a rush to see it.

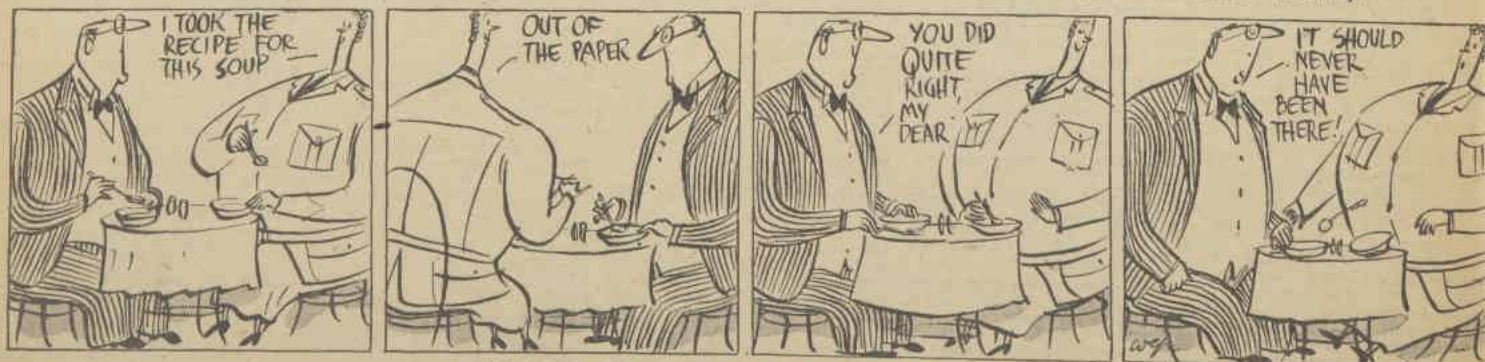
"A truck was placed alongside a slit trench, a rope was fastened to the truck and then lowered into the trench.

"To see the animal each chap had to crawl under the truck and out the other side.

"Although a disappointment to some city chaps not to see the bunyip, they were great sport, and did not give the show away till the last one crawled through."

Pte. W. L. Hale to his mother and sisters at Whyalla West, S.A.:

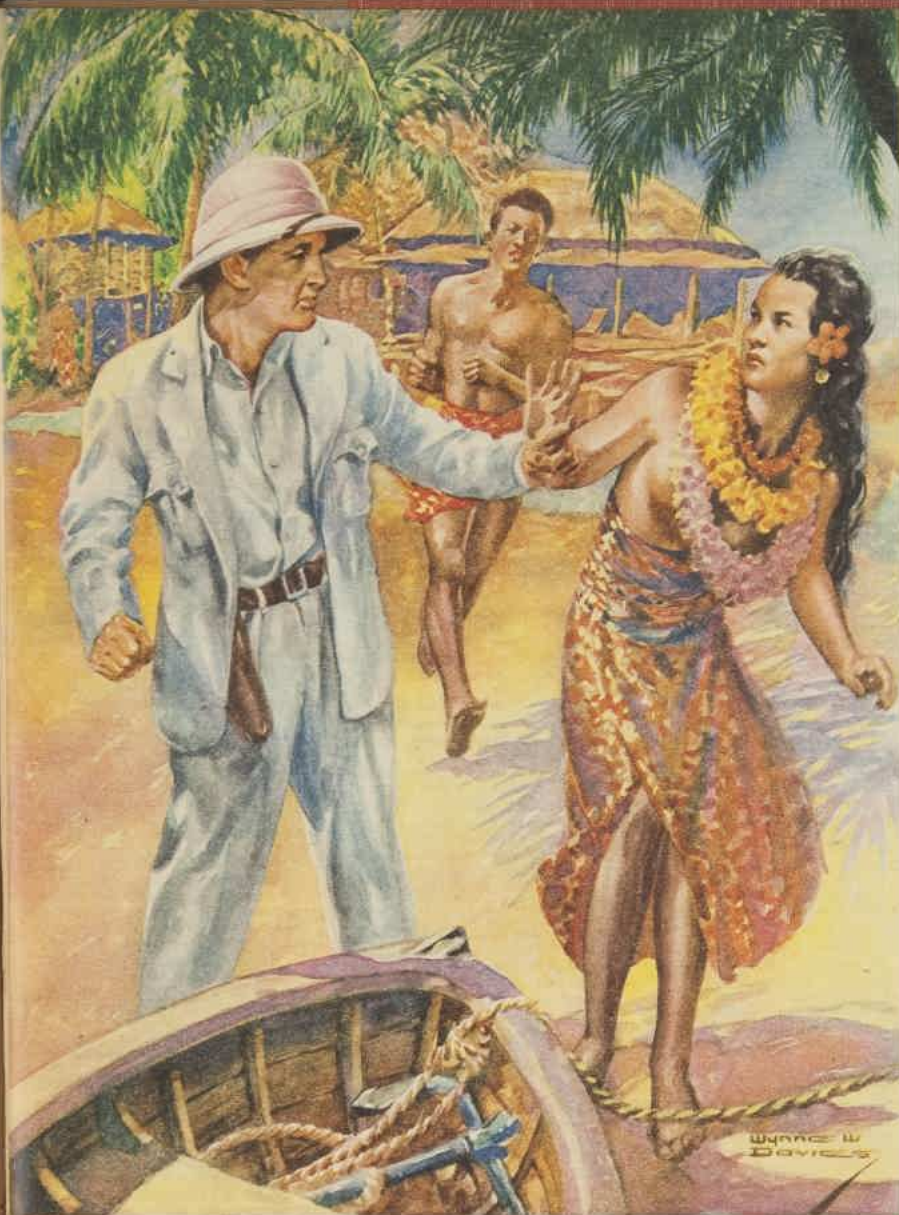
"IT is damnably cold, and the two araws in my bunk have got crossways, making it more uncomfortable than ever—if possible."



IN AND OUT OF SOCIETY . . . By Wep

THE BELLED BOY

The tinkling chime — sweet music to another — awoke in Henn only thoughts of revenge.



Reri's smile died as he saw Henn grab Mamo by the wrist.

FROM Sydney to Frisco the name of Captain Henn was mud. Everywhere he went he left an ooze in which simple folk floundered, bogged and trapped, and even those who weren't so simple had to work hard to keep their insides dry and their inner souls unembittered.

Where innocence was concerned he was the Great Disillusionment; he was the destroyer of trust and faith, the despoiler of nest-eggs and the distiller of poisonous but not so vaporous graft.

Nor was that all. Unlike so many of the bad and wicked of this world he looked the part. He had an evil way of squinting; fast-blows had fashioned his lips so that they looked like a monstrous piece of Epstein sculpture. Of course you should have shied away from him in alarm and terror directly you saw him. But somehow you always stayed, fascinated. And then you were robbed and stripped and left by the South Sea side for a good samaritan to pick up.

There was one good samaritan in the Pacific whose name was Peter Goodhope. He was the trader at Ranooga, and because Henn operated in that centre a lot he had plenty of practice in the art of benevolence, giving the plucked ones here a few feathers to carry on with, and the skinned ones there a few inches of toughened hide to cover their rawness.

Sometimes Peter got in first, got between Henn and his selected victim. He didn't go out of his way to clash with Henn, but Henn was so active, so unscrupulous, so evil you couldn't help being in a sort of perpetual state of warfare with him.

Captain Henn felt that way, too, about it. There was nobody in the Pacific he hated more than Peter, except, maybe, Peter's son, Mickey, who was little more than a toddler, and motherless. Henn reckoned you brought up kids on cuffs and kicks or they weren't any good to anybody. You didn't make a fool of

yourself with them, sitting them on your knee and telling them yarns, walking together each day to the little cemetery inland to place fresh crimson hibiscus blooms, sweet-smelling frangipanni, and ginger blossom on a grave there. You forgot the dead even if the dead had been the loveliest girl in Sydney. You didn't tell yarns; you taught kids how to lie and swindle and scheme.

Henn had warned Peter of the results of his interference many times. He was doing so now, although by the way he was shouting you'd think he was telling Sydney and Papeete, Honolulu, and Frisco too.

Peter had stepped in and cruelled the sale of a plantation over at Ranaotogo. Henn had cooked the shipments so that the show looked good to the young Australian Henn had got in tow; but not so good after Peter had got wind of the deal. Henn was mad about that; he'd never threatened Peter before with death, but this time he did.

"Listen," he shouted, "I've had enough of your buttin'-in. This is the last time you'll do it to me—and live. Warn my prospects to look out for the snags, will yer? I've stood enough of this from you. I've stood plenty, too. You give the office to the next dope I bring along here and there'll be two graves up there in the cemetery wanting attention. I'm telling yer—"

"Yes, you're telling me," agreed Peter coolly. "You're also telling the world—and the Resident, who's sitting on his verandah taking an interest in your roay promises. Being all for law and order he's probably more concerned than I am in your threats. Take it from me, Bully Hayes, I'm not asleep when you're around, and when the moment comes for you to do your

stuff I'll probably do mine a shade quicker. Believe it or not—"

The trouble was Henn really did believe it. That's why he'd taken so much from Peter in the past. Peter was no gross, gin-sodden, vice-ridden trader of the Pacific beaches. He lived clean and the sweet, poisonous drugs of the tropics hadn't dulled his eye or slowed up his actions. He was going back to Sydney one day to give Mickey a break, and he wasn't going back like some of the trembling wrecks he'd seen go "home."

"Hiding behind the Resident now," sneered Henn. "That don't make any difference to me. I'll get you just the same."

"If you get me you're welcome to the body," smiled Peter. "I'm going to sail along and put wise all the mugs you bring out here to skin, whether you like it or not. The

By FRANK NUNN

Resident and the missionary are here to look after the morals of the place, but you're my special poison, Henn; I've adopted you. I've got a personal interest in these mugs of yours on the business side. When they've been bled white by you they're not much good as customers for me. This is one of those economic wars, too, you see."

But Henn could see nothing but murder—and the Resident, in white ducks, sitting alertly on his verandah over the way. No use running his own neck in a noose. He'd get Peter this time, only he'd have to do it by stealth. He'd have to work it out so that he wouldn't cruel things for himself, too, catch Peter unawares somewhere with no witnesses about.

He might catch him at the cemetery one morning—but the cemetery was overlooked by a section of the

village. That wouldn't do. He'd have to think it out—

He turned and left the store. He saw the Resident suddenly relax and look the other way. Ready to pounce, snarled Henn to himself, I'll have to go canny. He swerved abruptly between two buildings, and made for the beach where his dinghy was drawn up clear of the water. He put a foot on the gunwale and stood thinking and muttering furiously.

There was just a slight swell on the lagoon. Chimes came from his schooner. A few cables' length offshore floated a large rusty bell-buoy which had drifted in from the devil-knows-where a few months before tolling lugubriously as it came down the lagoon. Maybe it had drifted, current-borne, from the seaboard of Canada or the foggy coast of Alaska clear across the Pacific.

Nobody knew or cared, but it had become a part of the life of Ranooga now, strangely silent when the lagoon was calm, but thunder-tongued when the sea belled over the reef and sent it rocking. There was just enough movement in the water now to cause its iron tongue to loil now and again against the bell, producing a lazy, muffled hum.

There were the sounds of other bells on the air, too—sweet, silver bells. Henn's seaman's mind had noted the others subconsciously, but these caused him to throw up his head sharply and look around. He caught sight of Mickey then, gasping, choking, laughing, tearing up the beach with a native girl in pursuit.

Mickey wore a harness covered with little bells, and as he moved they jingled musically. Peter put the harness on him every day so that if he strayed from Mamo who looked after him, and got lost in the jungle of the island he'd be found easily enough.

Henn's eyes glinted as they followed Mickey's flight. Then they dropped on Mamo who was now close beside him. He reached out and grabbed her by the wrist. She was the loveliest thing you'd want to look at anywhere, and Reri, her swain, who was proud and arrogant in all other things, was humbly appreciative of his good fortune in catching and holding Mamo's flashing dark eyes. He brought up the rear of the pursuit, going along with an easy, lazy lope. His indulgent smile died when he caught sight of Henn. Henn had tried to take Mamo from the island once, and that was something Reri would never forget or forgive.

Henn stood and watched until palms hid the three from his sight. And then suddenly he started. He smacked his thigh smartly, and with a swift look round made off along the beach. He walked for a mile and a half away from the village until he came to the shack where Shoestrings, a beach-comber, lived. He found the beach-comber on his back on his filthy bunk

staring vaguely up at a large black moth which circled and fluttered restlessly on a piece of hesian. There was an empty gin bottle on the sand beside the bunk.

Henn looked at the bottle and grinned. "Out of liquor?" he asked genially.

Shoestrings tore his eyes from the moth. He blinked at Henn without his expression changing. "I could do with another bottle," he whispered without hope.

"O.K., then," said Henn, suddenly as hard as nails, "Listen—"

Ranooga was not a large island. It was in shape like a slice of lemon cut in halves with the village and beach and lagoon along the rindless edge. It was about five miles across at its widest part, and about ten miles long. Its length was east to west. From its western

end, running parallel with the beach and about two hundred yards inland, there was a deep, rocky chasm up which in rough weather the sea roared and foamed. On the south side the jungle ran across the five miles of island right to the edge of the chasm and luscious lianas dripped over the edge. It was a dangerous spot in the dark, for it ran right behind the village and had trapped more than one unwary native returning home from the southern side of the island at night.

The trading store and the Residency were close to the lower end of the chasm and the bell-buoy was out in the lagoon opposite. The mission had been built on the western side of the village—almost on the point created by the chasm and the lagoon. There was only one way of getting to it from any part of the island, and that was past the store, through the village, for the chasm cut off all other approaches.

Peter had bought a set of jingling harness for Mickey, because Mickey had a habit of making a break for the jungle whenever the opportunity occurred for him to fade away. Mamo had proved an alert and watchful nurse, but recently had got into the habit of falling into day-dreams or, if Reri were about, following his movements with eyes as large as saucers and as bright as stars. She'd wake up and find that Mickey wasn't there, and then there'd start a panic-stricken search for him.

Peter wouldn't have minded so much if the chasm hadn't been so near the village, but he was terrified that Mickey might one day fall into it. He'd wake up at night in a sweat after dreaming he'd seen Mickey's body on the cruel rocks below. There wasn't much chance for anybody who slipped over the edge.

PETER had belogun to watch the watcher of late, and he went to the window now to check up on Mamo's vigilance. Both she and Mickey were in the lacy shade of a palm, Mickey on his back, weary after a heavy day, and Mamo thumbing a magazine with wedding bells all over the cover. You could see that Mamo was fascinated by so many bells, so much wedding dope.

Somebody came into the store and gave a gentle cough. It was the missionary, mild and benign. He had only one grievance in life, and that was the church people back in England were slow in sending out the bell for the mission they had promised two years before. Every time a vessel called in at Ranooga he would call at the store and inquire hopefully whether the bell had arrived.

"I notice there is a vessel at the anchorage. Did it by any chance bring—"

Peter explained it was a survey boat in for water. "Over in England they're forgotten you, padre."

"I remind them of their promise in my report every six months. It is very discouraging—"

He went away shaking his head sadly and Peter grinned after him. The missionary was very eager to fill the empty tower at the mission with a bell. He wanted one that had been hung in a village church so, maybe, he could shut his eyes while it was tolling and see again the farms and the haystacks, the beech woods and primroses on grassy banks beside a stream. You get that way in the Pacific.

A few days later Mamo came into the store with an odd mixture of joy, triumph, and despair in her dark eyes. She and Reri were going to marry. "Church wedding," she exulted. But here was the snag and disappointment. "No wedding bells—no bell on the church. I could weep—"

Please turn to page 18



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The Belled Boy

Continued from page 17

he knew of. There was one on the schooner at the anchorage, but the survey party was pulling out that day, otherwise he might have boarded her with his silly request. That particular bell chimed then, clear and sweet. And the bell-buoy, as if in answer, gave a lazy dong.

Peter straightened up as if shot. Why hadn't he thought of that before? The bell could be taken out of the buoy and hung in the mission tower for the occasion. How's that for an idea and a half?

He sprang to the door, Mamo was shuffling disconsolately along the beach. His excited shout gave her sudden hope and she came speeding back.

Henn landed on the other side of Ranoaga before dawn on Mamo's wedding day. He didn't know it was her wedding day for he'd been over at Papete making a purchase. He held it in his hand now as, crouched behind a bush, he watched his schooner heading back for the open sea in charge of his cross-eyed mate. It was a harness similar to that worn by Mickey and festooned with silvery bells.

Henn watched the schooner until it was lost in the mists of dawn, and then he made himself comfortable just inside the edge of the jungle. It was no part of his scheme for either himself or his schooner to be observed on or near Ranoaga. He'd been dodging vessels during the last few days so that afterwards he couldn't be reported as having been near Ranoaga. He'd got a foolproof alibi fixed up with a pal of his over at Sauren, too, so that they couldn't make things awkward for him after the business was discovered.

Oh, yes, he'd got the thing nipped out well. He was going to finish off Peter and his brat and take Mamo off on the schooner with him. Shoestrings would go along, too—or, maybe, Shoestrings wouldn't.

He rolled himself a cigarette. There was no hurry. He'd got a five-mile tramp across the island ahead of him, and he was allowing himself two hours for that. He wanted to arrive on the other side just before sundown when Shoestrings was due to make Mickey vanish by force or enticement. Then when Mickey was missed, Peter and Mamo would start rushing around searching for him. That's where he himself would come in. He'd start jangling the harness back in the jungle, retreating as they followed up the sounds. He'd lead them on until they were half-way across the island. And then—and then—

Henn patted his pocket and grinned evilly. There was a gun there. He'd spring out on Peter, and he wouldn't have a chance. And if Mamo gave trouble he'd wing her, too.

He blew a cloud of smoke and admired his own genius. There was a scheme for you—with bells on. You had to be smart to think out a trap like that. Captain Henn had never doubted his own smartness, but no scheme had given him greater satisfaction than this, his latest.

Towards noon Henn stopped his mental gloating to look up at the sky. There was wind there. The sea was topping up a bit, too. Nothing much, however, and a bit of a blow wouldn't interfere with his plans. He closed his eyes again to dream of his coming triumph.

At two o'clock he was getting restless, and half an hour later he was on his way. He started slowly enough, for a five-mile hike through a jungle would take it out of a seaman, and if he took it easy he wouldn't knock himself up. A mile in he sat down on a trunk and mopped his brow. It was close and quiet. He could hear the surf

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drumming on the reefs; but that was all. Everything else was still. The trees were close and high. There were huge hedges of brambles running this way and that, and lianas hung and trailed everywhere. He was out of his element, and felt smothered. Apart from the ports, which were different, he hadn't been so far away from the sea for years.

It took him longer to do the second mile because the jungle got thicker. When he was roughly half-way across he looked at the sun uneasily through the tree-tops. It seemed pretty low; but you needed a horizon to tell the time, and that was one thing you didn't get in a jungle. There was no distance. There was no air either.

This lack of air made him pant and perspire. He was used to sweeping breezes on the wide, open seas. He felt stifled. He'd be glad to get out of it, and he started to hurry. And then a liana tripped him and the fall knocked the wind out of him, and he lay there and gasped while the muffled echoes of his distress mocked him.

He still gripped the harness. The little tinkling bells seemed to mock him, too. They sounded like the gleeful, derisive laughter of a child. Mickey, Mickey laughing at him because he wasn't getting anywhere. He'd show the brat.

He stumbled to his feet and came up against a hazard of bramble. He tried to force his way through, but couldn't make it. He emerged torn and scratched and bleeding, and went round its western flank; there seemed no end to it. And when he got round it he couldn't find the sun—

Almost frantic now he started to run. He had to get somewhere behind the store before sundown, otherwise his scheme failed. He'd had no idea the going would be so slow and difficult. He should have started earlier. And now he'd have to be careful not to get off his course. If he started to head west or east instead of north—that was a new thought, disturbing, and he stopped.

But then he remembered the bell-buoy in the lagoon and that slowed down his rising panic. There was a sea running, and it would be ringing continuously. All he had to do was listen and steer for it just as if he were on a steamer going through the reefs.

He listened. He heard it tolling faintly dead ahead. Straight between him and the bell, then, was

MOPSY—The Cheery Redhead



"No, we're not fighting! I'm just getting Nancy in shape to be practice victim in our first-aid class."

the trading store. All he had to do was to edge over a little to the east to clear the end of the chasm and he was set.

It was getting gloomier, darker, in the jungle. He'd get there but with nothing to spare. He started to run again, crashing through the brush and lumbering round the brambles.

He couldn't see far ahead of him now, but he knew it was always dark in the jungle a good deal earlier than sunset in the open.

And the bell was getting closer. Hadn't far to go now. But what a noise it was making. He'd only heard it make a racket like that once before and that was when a typhoon hit the island. No typhoon now, but there must be one sea and a half running in the lagoon to make it rock like that. It puzzled him a bit, but he was too anxious to get through to work it out.

There was a tangle of lianas ahead; in the dusk he could see the tangle stretching a long way to the right and left. The blood was hammering in his ears. He wasn't going to waste any more time and effort going round; he'd go straight through it.

He went—stepped into space. In the last split-second of suspension his astonished eyes saw a bunch of natives swinging on a rope on the other side of the chasm. As they hauled and let go a bell thundered in the tower of the mission. Wedding peal.

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MRS. BONNER

beamed. She had an audience and it was new. It wasn't often she had the chance she had now. Most of her cronies knew all her stories. My, wouldn't they shut up quick when she came out with this one.

At long last, when Mrs. Bonner had told the weary men her history from her first husband onwards, they took her home in a police car, and it gave her great satisfaction to know that all her neighbors had their eyes glued to their windows.

The building was dark and deserted, and the street seemed eerie in the brownout. Kay walked up the steps into the hall and looked round. She was glad Mr. Rundel's office was on the ground floor. She had left her quarterly boat-ticket at the office, and would just have time to get it before she met Sam.

She fitted her key in the door and opened it. She shivered slightly. In imagination she could see Mr. Rundel's still form huddled over the typewriter, and the dark shadow of the murderer against the wall. A breeze sprang up and the blind rattled suddenly. The window was open at the top. Kay closed it quickly and snapped the catch across.

Now for that ticket. She searched nervously, avoiding the table as much as she could. Then she saw it, and picked it up with a sigh of relief. She must not keep Sam waiting.

She had reached the door when the lights went out. She was paralyzed with fear. She thought she heard someone in the room behind her. In a panic she ran, brushing against something in the hall. It recoiled, and Kay screamed. As she fled down the street, footsteps sounded behind her.

She dashed across the street just in front of a tram, and knew that whatever was following her would have to wait. The sight of Sam, strong and reliable, was an utter relief.

"You needn't have hurried so," he said. "We aren't late. Come on in and we'll have a chance to talk before it starts."

Kay couldn't have spoken if her life depended on it, and she clutched Sam's arm as they went in. She kept telling herself that she must not look behind her. She wouldn't tell Sam what had happened. He would be most annoyed that she had gone to the office alone.

Sam reached for her hand. "Let's forget all this upset just for to-night. It spoils everything. Kay?"

"Yes, Sym?"

"I love you."

"Me too," Kay replied softly.

The lights dimmed and the voices of the audience subsided. Music flowed from an invisible source. The show had begun.

Sergeant Thomas ate his tea in gloomy silence. The case he was on annoyed him.

The trouble was that there wasn't enough motive. Nothing stolen, unless it was the notebook Sam had mentioned.

Another thing puzzled him. Among the papers in the safe (he had not showed these to Kay) was a pile of pages from a loose-leaf book, neatly typed. It was a sort of diary, not of events, but of people. There were notes on a motor tour—"Canberra. Reeks of politicians and one-way traffic." Then later—"February 27. Ten years to-day since June Phipps died."

According to Kay Mr. Rundel's "Character Book," as he called it, was a kind of personal jotting pad. Here he put down peculiarities of those around him, as well as odd items of interest. It had been on the verge of falling to bits, and Kay had suggested he type it onto loose pages.

A lot of people seemed to be interested in that notebook. Mr. Rundel's landlady, who, according to the

Why Murder Mr. Rundel?

Continued from page 12

"A new ribbon!" she cried. "A new ribbon on the typewriter."

"Go easy now, steady on. We can't have you cracking up." He raised his voice. "Sam!"

Sam came in, looking from one to the other in inquiry.

"You called, sir?"

"Yes. This young lady is getting a bit hysterical. See what you can do, will you?"

"I'm not!" she cried. "Listen. It's come to me. I've said it over and over and I've only just realised what it was. I changed the ribbon. That means Mr. Rundel was working on a new ribbon."

The two men looked mystified.

"Won't do," said Mr. Thomas at last. "Plenty of people use new ribbons and we can't find what he typed."

"No, but don't you see—of course you wouldn't know, though—until the ribbon reverses there is only one set of typing on it. You can decipher it if you take time. It's all jumbled up and run together, but it can be done. I've done it myself."

"Suffering holy tomatos!" It was a whisper. Mr. Thomas dived for the door, and returned carrying the typewriter in his arms.

"Miss Denning, please remove the ribbon," he urged, "and we'll see what we can see."

Kay wound the ribbon onto the right-hand spool.

"It will be better if you leave it on," she advised. "You can run it through as slowly as you want it and it won't blur."

"O.K. Now for it."

They were all excited and the two men craned over the machine wondering what they would find.

"Stand by to take it down, Kay. We can sort it out later."

"Right, Sym."

"Hm! There's an I. Then an e, u r and something else, a, that's it. Full stop. These things all run in together, drat 'em."

THEY worked on slowly, puzzling over the jumble of letters zig-zagging along the ribbon, and then called a halt to work it out.

Mr. Rundel's remarks were far from complimentary, and concerned people and places.

After reading it, the three looked at one another and went back to work. It wasn't as easy as they expected, and there wasn't too much ribbon left. Sam was becoming more expert at deciphering. Then they struck a bit of reminiscence, and when they had worked it out Kay read it to them.

"It is twenty years ago to-day. That money represented my total savings. Not that I minded at the time. I suppose I was in love with his wife. She was so very ill and the operation saved her life. I sometimes wonder if he realises just what I did for him and how much I risked. He seems to be doing well now. Perhaps he has forgotten. I don't like blondes. June was dark. It was lucky for him that day at the gymnasium that I asked him why he was acting so queerly. He'd been taking lessons from a little Jap and was doing well. Then he told me. Somehow we managed it. I drew out my savings and he put back the money before anything was discovered."

Just that and no more. The rest of the ribbon was blank. He had been stopped there by his fateful visitor.

Mr. Thomas mopped his brow.

"Very interesting. Wonder who he is? Evidently he likes blondes and old Rundel did not. 'June was dark' was she? Nice name, June. June! Well, you two go and chase yourselves. I'm going to be busy."

At three o'clock Mr. Thomas came in and demanded a cup of tea.

"All over," he said briefly. "Caught him unawares and he just went to bits. His girl-friend didn't like it. Their engagement was in the papers and she's ramping mad at him now."

Kay snorted. "Whose girl-friend?"

Mr. Thomas sat on the table and rolled a cigarette.

"When you two left this morning I did a bit of comparing. Read up all the leaves of the book we had and then got going on those notes of Kay's. Found what I was after."

"It all started years ago. The villain and Rundel worked in a bank and the villain's wife was seriously ill and needed an operation. He didn't have the money, so he—er—'borrowed' it from the bank. Rundel found out and paid it, as you may have gathered from what we found out this morning."

"The robbery was never discovered. Rundel seemed to be rather fond of the lady, judging from his book."

"Well, Rundel left the bank and started advertising. The villain's wife died, and the villain tried to drown his sorrows in work. He boasted he would land a job right next to the top dog and he slaved for years for that one thing. Then he met a gold-digger and fell for her. She wouldn't marry him unless he got the job he aimed for, and he couldn't live without her. He got the job all right, and that meant that he automatically got the girl, too."

"He had to tell someone. He was so pleased with himself. So he came in to tell Rundel."

"Well, Rundel was typing out of his notebook. He was a queer old cuss. Seemed as if he liked to make people wriggle. He read out what he had written and the murderer saw all his bright dreams turning into a nightmare. For all he knew Rundel might have read that bit to someone else. He feared that chapter in his past would get known at the bank, and in spite of all his hard work it would ditch his career and his girl-friend."

"It was quite simple. He was a ju-jitsu expert, and Rundel hadn't the faintest notion of what his simple act had done to his friend. He couldn't know that the thought of frustration had very nearly unhinged the murderer's mind. So Phipps just walked out after he'd done the job, leaving things just as they were, but taking the notebook, the loose pages on the desk, and the sheet in the machine."

"The one thing he didn't know was that Rundel's typist had put a new ribbon on the typewriter. Funny, the things that will hang a man."

"Martin Phipps," said Kay, and shuddered. "Well, I suppose I'll have to be looking for a new job now. It's all rather horrible."

"Hear, hear!" said Sam. "I've got the very job ready for you right now. You can start on Monday morning, Mrs. Symington Sam."

Mr. Thomas looked at the two flushed faces and whistled.

"Suffering holy tomatos!" was his contribution as he disappeared through the door.

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LOOK FOR THE BLISTER

Meg Dawson, of the Secret Service, tackles her most baffling case.

THAT morning, my chief said to me: "Meg, how's your imagination?"

"Good," I said. When he calls me Meg it means real business. It only happens when he's too worried to observe formalities.

"Well," he went on, "You'll have to give me every ounce you've got. Wanted to leave you out, really—it's dangerous, its nasty—"

"But—" I began.

"Yes, yes—we know all about that—right corners you've been in before, etcetera. My dear Meg... Are you aware that we are now in a war? A real war. Here. Now. This moment. And somehow I don't want your blood on my head."

"Please," I said. "Don't go cold on this assignment now. Womanly intuition, and all that, tells me I shall find a way out—"

"Dent didn't. Last night, whatever he found out went out with him. Looked like an accident. Jostled getting off a late tram and bashed on the head. Never regained consciousness, but kept on muttering: 'The blister—look for the blister—'

"Now, what d'you think he meant?" The chief gave me no time to be sorry. He was crisp and sharp again. "Some person with a blister somewhere—or what?"

"Blister..." I said. "What's it slang for? Something legal?"

"Blister? By jove, yes—a summons."

"A summons? Might be some message?"

"It might," he answered dryly. "It might mean anything. I spent the night thinking of all the things it might mean. Now you can have a go. And find out, Meg. Same old game—leakage of information to enemy—particularly regarding fortifications and troop movements in the north and west. But it's getting close to the bone now."

"No clues?"

"Only Dent's mutterings—"

"Where'd he been?"

"Heaven knows."

"I could be dry, too. 'No wonder,' I remarked, 'that you inquired after the health of my imagination.'"

From all of which you may have deduced that I am one of the few women in this country allowed to use what wits they have in the service of said country. Intelligence, yes, that's what it gets called.

On the films you'd recognise me as No. 1 Dangerous Woman: the beautiful spy. In a thriller you'd find me as Secret Agent No. XX00. In real everyday Australian life I am Margaret Dawson, attached to—well, shall we call it the Inside Service Bureau?

When it comes to thinking out a tough problem, I always go and sit in the foyer of a leading hotel. Coincidence plays a big part in Inside Service. And where in the whole world is there a better spot for seeing coincidence become significant than in that foyer?

I'd been sitting there some time, letting nothing pass me in the hopes of raising a scent, before I decided I might as well ring the proper authorities and get a list of all summonses served recently. I didn't have a real hunch that way, but at least it was action—and you never can tell.

A quarter of an hour later I stepped out of the telephone booth opposite the cigarette counter, with the desired list in my hand, and collided with a foreigner. But he said softly:

"Well! Are you well, Meg?"

It was Demaret. I'd not seen him for six years. Then it was on the other side of Australia.

"Do we have time to celebrate?" he asked, still with that slight slur of accent he once told me he'd never been able to lose, to his annoyance. I liked it.

"Rather," said I.

We went into the lounge and ordered drinks. "To you," said Demaret, raising his glass. "Did you have good hunting in Broome?"

"What do you mean?" I demanded. "Oh, my dear lady, surely you do



not imagine I imagined you were—just a barmaid?"

"I don't like the way you put it," I laughed. "I enjoyed my time in Broome—and the trade's a good one."

"Why, yes," he agreed, watching me with his dark eyes until I felt the blood start to rise. Absurd! "But," he said, "surely you will pardon me if I make a mistake? I thought you were something—more dramatic, shall we say?"

"What about you?" I twisted. "Do you still buy pearls?"

"Sometimes. At present I fill a berth as a ship's officer. I've always held my ticket, you know, though I gave up the sea for something more dramatic. Like buying pearls."

What was he hinting? He knew nothing about me. Time was, in Broome, when I'd been a little sorry he knew nothing about me; but my job leaves a girl no time to grow sentimental. It had been a tough assignment, that one. Moreover, I'd solved it.

"D'you remember the last time we drank together?" Demaret asked. "Hosler was shouting drinks all round. He'd just fished that colossal blister. Remember?"

Did I remember? Heavens, how slow of me not to have remembered before! "Look for the blister—" Of course, it was a hundred to a gooseberry that poor old Dent meant a pearl-blister!

At that moment a boy went through the room paging a guest. "Calling Mr. Leeming..."

"Meg—you're not going?"

I was pulling on my gloves. "Look for the blister..." Broome—pearl-blister—Japanese—information. Clear as an arc-light. And I'd nearly missed it. I gave the good old pub foyer a metaphorical pat on the back. It hadn't failed me yet. All I had to do was find one particular blister—or the man or woman wearing it. More or less simple. It was time to get right on with the job.

"Well, just one more," I conceded. "That blister of Hosler's—it was a whooper, wasn't it? Demaret, who bought it?"

"I did." I could feel him watching me.

"Oh. What did you do with it?"

"Aren't women inquisitive?" he said. "What do you think a buyer would do? I had it hored—and I sold it."

"Oh," I said again.

"To a Chinaman you will remem-

"You realise that your mission has failed," the woman said tauntingly to Meg.

ber—everyone knew his name in Broome. Old Lee Ming."

"Calling Mr. Leeming," bellowed the boy so close I nearly dropped my bag.

"Evasive devil Mr. Leeming," commented Demaret. "That's the third time he's been paged to-day. And he's never here."

Now I was watching Demaret as hard as he'd watched me, only not, I hope, so boldly. I was even feeling a little sick. I did not want to think—what I was thinking.

He lay back in his chair and said idly: "Meg, have you ever thought how handy it would be to have a name paged through a place like this by way of signal? Ring this pub, for instance, give any name you like, and then ask for some other name to be called. No one here of that name, of course, but someone else would be, listening for that pre-arranged name which would be the signal for—well, whatever the signal was for."

"You make it sound involved—but I get the idea. Too bad if someone with the paged name were here."

"Oh, Meg! Need the call-maker stay at the phone? And, of course, you'd choose an unusual name."

one ridiculous second I thought I'd chuck this assignment in. His voice sounded too nice—but in our game we swear an oath about personal lives and duty.

I went straight to check up on the phone calls for Mr. Leeming. Yes, he'd been called two or maybe three times in the past few days. No, he was not staying at the hotel. No one of that name ever had, as far as they could remember. But after a great deal of trouble it became apparent that Mr. Leeming had from time to time received telephone calls. No one knew if he answered them or not. They couldn't be sure of that. But I felt sure.

Either Demaret knew that name was used as a signal or it was just a lucky break for me again. Leeming could stand for Lee Ming. And it was to old Lee Ming that Demaret sold that blister six years ago. It was a name he'd remember, he'd said so... "Look for the blister—" Some blister, Hosler's had been. No one would be likely to forget it easily or miss it either! It would make a fine identification mark for secret traffic.

The only catch was, if Demaret were an enemy agent, what game was he playing with me—and, any-

how, it would now be impossible for me to sit around in the foyer and watch out for the arrival of the blister, or the further calling of Mr. Leeming. I told all this to the chief. "Imagination certainly good," he commented. "But stick to it. You can have Fraser to lounge-lizard round the pub."

So Fraser lounged round the pub most of twenty-four hours a day, while I sat beside the telephone in my flat. But the second evening things began to move again.

First, a ring came from Demaret. I have what's known as a silent number. Naturally, all my worst suspicions revived—I also had to admit he must be fairly competent to get hold of it. But I didn't let on by sounding surprised.

"Oh, it is you," he said. "How's your husband?"

"My what—" I began, but caught up with myself just in time. "Not here," I said. "A.R.P. meeting."

"Handy place for husbands—hope he's a good A.R.Pist—could you do a picture meeting with me? Or

would he A.R.P. too much when he comes home?"

"Your wit is sufficient to check any date—" I retorted. "But I couldn't make it."

He suggested he might call on me. I refused. I said I was making jam, and when that was done I would have to bottle it and then want to turn in.

He said it was really more important to make jam or gather rosebuds. In the end, he grew so persistent that I just hung up. At any moment Fraser might try to ring and find my number engaged.

Fraser did ring, within ten minutes. I heard he was excited.

"I've seen it," he said. "Set in a ring."

"Where are you?"

"Ringing from the dockside. I followed her from the hotel," he answered.

"Her?"

"Yeh. Listen, can you join me at once?"

"Yes. Where?"

"Down here. You know that solitary tree?" Yes, I knew it. "I'll wait there. Hurry."

At my flat door I once again all but collided with Demaret.

His smile at my hat was a masterpiece. "Jam all nicely bottled?" he inquired.

"Of course," I said. "Now I have a letter to post."

"Can't I?" He expected a refusal. His eyes had left my hat and lingered on my name card at the door. "You're dying to know why I haven't changed it, aren't you?" I said.

"Well, since you are here, come in and I'll tell you."

I unlocked the door and held it. "After you," he said.

I said: "Victoria first—" and fell against him so suddenly he half stepped in. I gave him a shove for luck, and banged the door. The flat was already well locked on the inside. But I would have to be very quick.

My car stood parked at the kerb. Within twenty minutes I was at Fraser's appointed meeting-place. But I had wasted five minutes ringing the bureau and telling them to arrest the man they would, I hoped, find locked in my flat. Fraser had gone.

In the black-out the meeting-place seemed extra eerie. I'd left the car a block back. I was just wondering whether it was best to hang around or advise the chief on progress to date, when a couple of loafers walked past, eyed me off, turned, and came up.

"G'night, sis," said one.

"None of y'check," I retorted.

By H. DRAKE-BROCKMAN

"You mean you might, like Leeming, for instance?"

"Is that unusual?"

"Well—it doesn't take much imagination to turn it into Lee Ming." Demaret never batted an eyelid. He laughed and said: "Nice work. Why don't you apply for a job with the Anti-Fifth-Column Society? And, by the way, I came clean, now it's your turn: what are you working at now?"

Noon. What job could a girl like me hold down, and be free at noon?

"Aren't men inquisitive?" I murmured. "Did it not occur to you, Mr. Demaret, that in six years I may, among other things, have got myself married?"

"Well—it did, somewhat regretfully," he answered. "But you wear no ring."

"It interfered with my grip of golf," I assured him. "I got in the habit of leaving it off."

"A bad habit," he said. "A girl as charming as you should always be what she seems—"

I gripped my bag tightly. For



The man reeled back, dazed and half-blinded by Meg's sudden attack.

"Don't happen to have missed your date with a bloke name of Fraser, do you?"

"Too right I have," I cried. "Why—wot d'you know?"

"Left us a message for you—said he'd gone to call on some friends down the street. Second house on the left, after you turn to the right, there."

"Well!" I said. "If he's not a beaut, not to wait for me."

"Chuck 'im. C'm on out with us for a change."

"I'd like to," I said. "But I reckon I'd better catch up with him. S' long."

Would they follow? They laughed and made off in the opposite direction. I felt satisfied that Fraser really had tipped them to wait with a message while he followed the hot scent.

I found the house easily. I knocked. As the door flew open I knew I had made a mistake.

By some back entrance, they'd reached me. They hustled me in and banged the door. I felt pretty mad at myself.

"Well, if you're not a pair of narks," I said. "Wot's the racket now?"

"We really didn't think you'd fall for us so easily, Miss Meg Dawson," said the one who had not so far spoken.

"Garn, Bill," burst out the other. "Don't you know it's wiser never to give yourself away like that to a lady?"

The first said stiffly, visibly annoyed: "You are thorough for tonight, please recollect."

The wharfed chap raised one eyebrow—a trick I always envy people—and tried to grin. Now we were in a little light, I could see a cheery smile was impossible for him—a dreadful burn scar on the cheek distorted his whole face. "Okey doke, boss," he retorted, and marched out a door on the left.

The place was a vegetable store of sorts—kind of lobby you find behind small shops.

"The game is up, Miss Dawson, I'm afraid," said my remaining captor. "And I am happy to have the pleasure of meeting you, at last." Suave voice contradicted the clothes he wore.

"Who are you?" I demanded.

"You heard what my late confederate remarked? Shall we say just an admirer? More than once, you have foiled my plans in the past, but now I'm afraid we meet but to say farewell—for ever."

"May I sit down?" I asked.

"A small uncertainty about the knees?" He handed me an old fruit case, bowed from the waist, clicked his heels and gave himself away, as I'd hoped he might. This was no Britisher, whatever his mate may have been.

"Danke, mein herr," I smiled.

He looked like an angry lout who has had his bullying stopped. "What have you done with Fraser?" I demanded.

"Poor Fraser. He was new to the game. It is difficult to pass out on one's first dangerous instruction."

"What do you mean? Is he dead?"

"You are always so—direct, Miss Dawson. I prefer a little subtlety."

"You do waste valuable time in gallantry, Herman," remarked a

light feminine voice. "Of course, Fraser, like Dent, is dead. Miss Dawson, I do not waste time. As I am afraid you will very soon discover."

I jumped to my feet. She had come in through a hessian curtain at the rear. A beautiful Chinese girl in the loveliest French-looking clothes.

"You recognise me?" she smiled. "Yes. I do. I've seen you several times in a city hotel." On inquiry I had been told she was a refugee from Hongkong.

She shook her head. "You do not recognise me. But I know you, Meg Dawson. And because I recognised you, and was afraid, you did delay the delivery of this for twenty-four precious hours."

She held up her hand. On her long-nailed finger she'd set a gorgeous pearl-blister ring—a marvel of Oriental craftsmanship.

"It was necessary to wear it, you see. The wearing of it lets all of us—er—into the know regarding certain movements. But with you sitting at that table trying to pump Demarec, well—having received it I could not wear it when I should have."

Fraser, of course, was new to us. Demarec I knew, like you, in Broome."

"Who are you?"

"My dear lady, do you remember having such an unromantic, but painful, trifle as a boil, in Broome?"

"I'm hardly likely to forget," I said.

"I thought not. Indeed it was so painful you had to avail yourself of the services of the Japanese doctor, the only white one being absent, in order to have the boil lanced."

"He did it very neatly, too," I said.

"Yes. He's a most competent man. I opened the door that day—"

"But his wife—"

"Surely you are not losing your intuition, Miss Dawson? Japanese ladies went in for make-up centuries before British matrons tried to learn the subtle art of charm. The Japanese are artists—it is as

easy for me to make up yellow as for you to make up gipsy, shall we say? Add three-inch heels and a trifle of extra padding—the Chinese are not so slim—"

"Who is wasting valuable time, now?" grunted Herman.

"Not at all," said Mrs. Maru Moto. "I feel these points are a satisfaction we owe Miss Dawson. My honorable husband," she added, "is now the head of our whole system in this country. He is no longer stationed, of course, at Broome. But he sent you these, with his honorable regards. He suggests that you should—use them. They will hurt less than the lancing of a boil, and save both yourself and us much unnecessary annoyance."

A delicate hand with lacquered nails held towards me a bottle containing two round grey pills.

"It was not made so easy for Dent. Or for Fraser. But my honorable husband remembers that you were once his patient."

I took the bottle.

"Now I leave you to Herman. He will show you into a room I frequently use myself. You will find a tray with some chicken and some wine. I hope you will see the wisdom of the Japanese way, as you realise, of course, that your mission has failed. I would not insult you by suggestions that you are less courageous than myself. On the wall of my room you will see a sword that more than one of my ancestors used against himself or herself, when the code of their country demanded it. I keep that sword as a reminder—I shall be on my way by plane to West Australia—with this." She held up the ringed finger. "And it is necessary for me to sleep—we start at dawn. Good-bye."

She gave me an enchanting smile and moved to the door on the left. "Remember, my husband said he would not care to hand over any old patient of his to Herman—but he might be obliged."

None too gently Herman seized my elbow. "This way," he said, holding aside the curtain, and a second later I heard him bolt the door behind me.

A small table with supper tray and wine in a crystal decanter was set

near a couch. The hara-kiri knife was strung up over the mantel. The walls were hung with Japanese tapestries—even the door through which I had entered remained invisible.

That gave me an idea.

Of course, Mrs. Maru Moto may have been in this room all the time. But it was unlikely.

I patted those walls all over. Didn't find a single soft spot or even a crack. I even yanked the old sword out of its scabbard. Covered in horrid red dust the blade was. Nothing happened.

I felt a sudden revulsion and ran to wash my hands at the basin I'd discovered behind a screen. Then I thought that if I washed my face

I might feel a little fresher. It was getting late, or rather early. And I had no idea when Herman was due to appear.

As I straightened it seemed to me I felt a little draught on my wet face. Or did I merely excuse a shiver to myself? Anyway, I glanced round the screen.

There was no sign of the door having opened. I went back to turn off the water and felt the same breath of air. And smelt a faint dank smell into the bargain. Excited, I shut off the tap and went back to my padding. Nothing. I pulled open the mirror cabinet again. It still held the secret of Mrs. Maru's make-up. Also, the draught seemed to have vanished.

Perhaps, I thought, it was so faint I could only feel it on wet skin. Then as I turned the tap a second time my wits began to function. Maybe there was some opening controlled by hydraulic pressure—why not? The clothes-line in the yard at my flat worked that way. So I left the tap running and started patting the walls a third time. Oh, yes, I believe in luck—this time I discovered a void behind one of the hangings.

I dragged aside the tapestry. No door, no wall—nothing but steps leading down into a black void.

I struck a match. Apparently there was some sort of passage. Suddenly I recollected tales I'd disbelieved—stories of old cellars—of old rock passages—of early-day rum hide-outs.

I gathered my handbag off the couch and down into the black I went, using my pocket torch. Brick at first, then rock wall. Right at the start the brass knob of another tap handle gave me a jolt. I turned it, and looked back. The patch of light at the top of the steps gradually disappeared. Still, if Mrs. Maru could use this passage, so could Meg Dawson!

All the same, I must admit that I got the jitters as I crawled along trickling water. Just when I thought I was going to be sick, I stubbed my toe on a rock.

Now I flashed my torch. Rocks barred the way, piled one on the other systematically. Here was the way out! Very easy to handle, the rocks. I had one or two down, when to my horror I heard them also being removed from the far side. I sank back.

Then a voice began in what I presumed was Japanese. Picked out the words, "Maru Moto."

Some sort of a guard perhaps?

A dim light appeared, and then a round head in silhouette. Next I saw there was only one man, and that he apparently expected me to come through the opening he had made—anyhow, he was standing aside, almost at attention. I think he certainly expected to see Mrs. Maru Moto emerge.

I SEIZED a handful of pebbles and rock-sand, flashed my torch straight at him and made for the entrance. The light dazzled him, and I am a good shot. He collected most of the sand in his eyes. I was past him almost before he realised he'd been tricked.

I scurried through the tiny cave, while he thrashed round and screamed in a sort of hysteria. I kicked out his lantern as I went.

The cave opened on a little rock-ledge above the harbor. A dinghy was moored to a ring in the rock by a long rope. Steps cut in the rock-face led me down into the boat—or would have if I'd not been in such a hurry. I fell into the water, actually, and had to scramble aboard. There was only one oar—I had to scull as best I could. I wondered if the sanded sentry could swim, and prayed he was as scared of sharks as I am!

In less than half an hour I was phoning the chief from one of those red boxes that make legs so conspicuous.

"Did you get the man in my flat?" I demanded.

"Yes. But—"

"Splendid. Now, please, there is hardly any time. Just go right ahead and get the Airlines people to advise all passengers for the west-bound that the plane is leaving an hour ahead of schedule. That will be in half an hour's time."

"What do you think Airlines will—"

"O.K., boss—but are we at war, or are we not? Please move. I'll explain later."

"Go ahead."

"Have some plainclothes men out at the drome, and instruct them to arrest a Chinese woman, if I'm not there myself. I expect to be—but you never can tell. That woman's got the blister. It's a pearl-blister. Made into a ring."

I had to hang round a little till I got a taxi. By the time I reached the hangar, things had begun to move.

The ground staff were pretty mad at being stirred up ahead of time. When I blew in looking like a suicide faded out of the harbor I'd quite a performance to get to the company agent, who was talking to our own men.

So I'd scarcely had time to explain a thing to the agent and our chaps, who were full of mystification, before the passengers started to arrive. And were they annoyed?

The agent strung them along with something about military orders, and assured them the plane would shortly be out on the drome and ready.

There was not a woman among them. Mrs. Maru Moto was cutting it fine.

I began to get nervy. What a fool I'd look if I had not been quick enough—if she'd been warned and had sufficient time to alter plans—

"All passengers here now," reported one of the men. "Full complement."

"What?" I said. "Have all the tickets been checked?"

"Yes, Miss. Agent doing the last now."

"See here, let me speak to him now."

We moved across to where the agent stood with the last arrival, a tall chap in an English-cut tweed coat and one of those super golf caps that looked as if it had been rammed on in a raging hurry. His voice, very Oxford, sounded more than mildly put out.

"Very sorry, sir," the agent was saying. "This ticket was booked under the name of Lee Ming. We understood a Chinese lady from Hongkong—"

"Do you expect me to believe that? I tell you my name is Leeming. I booked personally the day before yesterday—Can I help it if your idiotic clerks invent ladies from Hongkong or Timbuctoo to cover their spelling mistakes?"

"Extraordinary," muttered the harassed agent.

"Here's your man," I called to our chaps. The tall passenger had looked up and seen me. Involuntarily one eyebrow lifted at recognition. A dangerous accomplishment after all. I decided, since I tended to become a give-away habit—especially for the owner of such china-blue eyes! There should have been a scar, of course—but burn scars are easily assumed by those who have the knack.

Please turn to page 27



NO POWER NOW

By
ESTHER ROLAND

HE was staring, with the blank intensity of despair, at the rain streaming down the windscreen and the enveloping night beyond.

He was chilled and damp and stiff, and unconscious of it; he kept watching the patterns the water made on the windscreen, while rain trickled round the edges of the side-curtains.

Then he saw that there was somebody outside there in the darkness. Somebody who called aloud, the rain deadening the words.

He opened the door, edging away from the rain which poured in.

"Nice shower of rain we're having," said a girl's nonchalant voice; and she clambered in beside him, slamming the door after her. She was shivering violently, and her clothes squeaked as she sat down.

"Nice night you picked for a stroll," he replied, his nonchalance matching hers. He leaned forward and switched on the dashlight.

He saw that she was small, and

dressed in riding-breeches and shirt, and her hair was plastered down by the rain in streaks across her face.

"You seem to be in a fair way towards catching pneumonia," he remarked. "I'll give you something so you can dry yourself a bit." He leaned over the seat, and pulled up a large and battered suitcase. Balancing it on the back of the seat he opened it with some difficulty, and fumbled among its contents. He brought out a pyjama-coat, and shut and replaced the case.

When he offered her the pyjama-coat she stared at him without comprehension. And it was he who dried her wet arms, rubbing them vigorously until they tingled.

"Thanks," she said, and taking the coat from him she dried her face and neck and rubbed at her soaked hair. He watched her in silence, then looked out at the darkness again.

His brain began automatically to tackle the difficulties of this new contingency; but presently fatigue and strain overrode his will, and he was back again in that struggle with

water and mud of the earlier part of the night. Splashing through Nodroga Creek, already swollen beyond its normal modest proportions—ploughing through the sticky black mud, slipping, swerving, the steering-wheel spinning from his hands—getting out to rake the impeding mud that clung so tenaciously to wheels and mudguards—roaring along again in low gear—and then bogged, bogged to the axles.

"How long have you been bogged here?" the girl asked suddenly.

"I don't know. About three hours."

Something in his voice made her look up at him quickly. His face was in shadow, but she had an impression that it was both tired and grim.

"It's very important to you, isn't it, to get out quickly?"

He was a long time answering; and then it was with another question.

"What makes you think that?"

"Just—the way you spoke. It is important, isn't it?"

He laughed abruptly.

"Yes. It's very important. A matter of life and death."

"Must you get to town?"

"Would a telephone do?" she asked.

He was silent, and she went on quickly:

"Hold tight," Roy shouted as the floodwaters swept the log downstream.

There's a phone at Thorby's. It's farther along the road towards town—I passed the turn-off just before I came to the river. About four miles altogether, I'd say. Only—we'd have to cross the river." She paused, wrinkling her forehead. "The only other place near here is Young's, back the way you came—it wouldn't be more than three miles. But they haven't got the phone on, and it's across Nodroga Creek, anyway—gosh, what a mess we're in! Floods to the left of us, floods to the right of us—or at any rate, behind and in front of us! Do you think the river will have risen much by morning?"

"Probably."

"You aren't exactly conversational," she said, smiling. "Well, what do you think? Will we walk towards the river now, or wait till morning? I suppose we'd never cross it at night, anyway. If we could get across to Thorby's first thing in the morning, you could ring up a doctor from there."

"Who said I wanted a doctor?"

The harshness of his voice startled her, and she looked up at him. A trickle of fright went through her, then died again, for his expression had changed. He was looking now at the pool of water, gleaming in the dashlight, which had formed at her feet.

"You can't stay in those clothes," he said. "You'd better hop over into the back and dry yourself properly. There's a whole caseful of clothes there—put some of them on.

Roll the trousers up or something. They'll be better than those wet things you're wearing, anyway."

She scrambled over into the back, and when she had found the case and opened it he switched off the dashlight. He heard the rustle of clothes.

"Thank goodness Dad and Mum won't be worrying about me," she was saying. "It wasn't raining at all when I started out. The Youngs are friends of ours, and I was riding over to spend a day or two with them. They'll think I decided not to come because of the rain, and Dad'll think I was safely there before it set in."

"And why weren't you?"

"That horse. That confounded horse!" There was a sudden giggle from the back, and a pause. "No, it's not the horse I'm laughing at—it's this shirt. I think I've got it on back-to-front. What was I saying? Oh yes, about Diamond. I'm not terribly used to horses—I lived in the city till two years ago, and Diamond—he's got a will of his own. He wouldn't go properly for me at all. Just plugged along about two miles an hour, and then—well, I was thirsty—you remember how hot it was this afternoon—and when I'd crossed the river I got off to have a drink. And Diamond, the old brute, just pulled back hard when I wasn't expecting it, and pulled the reins right out of my hand. And went for his life. Oh, he's a charming horse, Diamond is—and me eight miles from home."



"He didn't come along the road?"

"No, he bolted straight off through the trees. Not a chance in the world of catching him unless he caught the reins on a stump or something. I ran after him for a bit, but it had started to rain and I couldn't see very far, and then when I came back to the river it seemed to be rising every minute, and it was getting dark. There, I'm dressed and dry again, thank you very much!"

She took her place on the seat beside him, and continued: "Of course what I should have done was cross that river and go to Thorby's and ring up. But Thorby's is off the road a bit, and I was afraid I might miss the track—and besides, that river looked so wide, and so—so menacing. Anyway, I decided I'd keep right on along the road to Young's. It's only six miles from the river, and I felt I'd rather walk along the road than a bush track, and the creek there's not nearly as wide as the river. But I was terribly slow. The rain never stopped, and it seemed to be pushing me back, as though—as though it hated me, and then, of course, every second step my feet would bog, and as often as not I'd pull my foot out and leave the boot stuck in the mud—" She paused, shuddering. "What time is it?" she said.

He switched on the light again for a moment, in order to read his wrist-watch. "Just on eleven."

"Is that all? I seem to have been walking—forever. I was just about to go to sleep in the mud when I practically bumped into your radiator. Don't you think we ought to introduce ourselves? My name's Westcott."

"Westcott. Your father bought Alec Hettie's place a couple of years ago, didn't he?"

"That's right." He took a packet of cigarettes from his coat pocket, offering them to her, and when she shook her head, he lit one himself. "What's the rest?" he said.

She tilted her head in mute inquiry.

"The rest of your name. Your Christian name."

"Oh—! It's rather awful. It's—well, for some dark reason my mother had me christened Primula Joan."

"Primula!"

He said it softly, as though tasting the syllables. The fitness of the name surprised him. His companion was a stranger—he hadn't even seen her in an adequate light—yet the odd little old-world name suited her. He wasn't even sure how he knew that it suited her.

"I like it," he said quietly, at last. And for a moment both felt that they had entered subtly into friendship. They sat in silence, grateful for each other's company, and the steady rain for the first time sounded soothing.

"And what is your name," she said.

"Roy Dean." "Then I've heard of you, too. You and your cousin live over Longwood way."

Roy Dean, from over Longwood way. There were some queer stories going round about the Dean cousins. She looked down at the floor, remembering his face as she had seen it in the dashlight. Lean and dark, with a hard, aggressive chin, and too-bright eyes. By no means a gentle or a happy face.

But that, she told herself, was because he was obviously and desperately worried. Worried about what? A matter of life and death—"Whose life is it that's at stake?" she said.

She heard him draw in his breath, and he laughed grimly.

"My own," he said. "And now, Miss Westcott, you'd better get into the back again, and get some sleep."

She obeyed him without a word, keeping her surprise to herself. Somehow her question had startled him out of his sullen equanimity. As her earlier suggestion about a doctor had done. But she was too tired to puzzle over him, and by the time she had found a comfortable position she was asleep.

It seemed only a moment or two later when she awoke to the sound of light, intermittent rain. Then she heard a man's voice, and instantly she was fully awake. "I'm ready," she said, sitting up. It was still very dark, and against the illuminated dashboard Roy's figure loomed as a dark and bulky shadow. It was a moment before she realised that he was leaning over the front seat, looking at her.

"Good morning," she said.

"Good morning," he answered

gravely. "Sleep well?"

"M a rvellously. But you — you must be feeling stiff, cramped up there all night in the front seat!"

"I'm all right. Anyway, there's enough walking to do to cure any stiffness—we're going to follow the plan of campaign you enlarged upon last night. Oh, and you'd better change back into your riding-breeches—they're still wet, but the trousers you're wearing now would never stay rolled up. And you'll find an overcoat of mine in that case. It'll help to keep you dry."

He switched off the light while she changed into the wet breeches, and when she was ready he opened the door for her, and she stepped out into the darkness of early morning. The rain felt light and fresh in her face, and the mud squelched cheerfully under her feet. In the distance a bull-frog gave hearty full-throated greeting to the coming dawn.

Primula laughed. "Listen to him!" she cried. "Walk—walk," he says—and he couldn't give better advice!"

Roy came close to her and took her arm.

"Careful where you tread," he warned. "It's better here on the side of the road, I think. No need

nothing; and presently the whispering quiet was threaded through with the singing of birds.

Primula began to sing herself, lightly and sweetly.

"Keep singing," he said, when she paused. So she sang as she stumbled on through the mud, her face wet and shining with the rain, the outside overcoat flapping grotesquely about her. Out of the distance there grew a blurred, monotonous sound which presently they identified as the faint roar of flood-waters. The dawn light deepened slowly; and with it the rain grew softer, and finally ceased.

"Grey sky and grey trees," said Primula, "and grey water on the roads—silver-grey, anyway—"

"It's a grey world," he said. "Except that your hair has a sunlight of its own in it. Do you know, I thought it was dark last night, when it was so wet—"

"It's wet now." "Not very. Just—spangled with raindrops. And it's curling as though it likes wet weather."

She looked up at him. He was much younger than she had thought last night. Over six feet—he had guessed that much before—and with shoulders to match. Dark disordered hair, slightly wavy, and thick black eyebrows with a frowning furrow between them. Brownish eyes that did not seem so menacingly bright this morning. A hard, strong, square-jawed face.

"Well," he challenged her, "what's the verdict?"

"The verdict is that your voice is out of keeping with your face."

This morning, anyway. Last night you sounded almost as gruff as you look."

"It's hard—even for me—to be gruff, slithering along in the mud at dawn with a funny little thing in a coat three times too big for her, who sings like a cricket all the way—and looks up at me with disconcerting blue eyes—"

"Look—there's the river!" she said.

They had come to the top of a slight rise, and from its height they could see the river. It had spilled over its high banks into a series of shallow depressions, and the dark waters swirled now against the trunks of trees which were normally many yards from its reach. A shifting mass of twigs and rubbish was matted against the marooned tree-trunks.

"I didn't realise it could rise so much in one night," Primula said.

"How on earth are we going to cross it? Isn't there something else we can do?"

"No," he said.

It seemed to her that his lips tightened as he spoke, and he stood very still, gazing out over the flood with sombre eyes, his face rigid. For the second time she was nervous of him, and to cover it she began to speak a little too quickly.

"What about across country—north or south? Of course, I know it's a lonely stretch of land—I suppose we could wander for days... Or perhaps we could go back towards Nodrogga Creek? It's smaller than this, though I know it's dangerous when it's flooded. Was it rising when you crossed it last night?"

He didn't seem to hear her.

They still stood with arms linked, and for a moment forgetting her fear of him as the full realisation of their predicament dawned upon her, she clung to him tightly. The rain-washed air was exhilarating, and she drew it in in deep breaths, listening to the staccato croak of the frogs, the vindicated cry of the storm-bird, and the shiver of leaves in a fleeting breeze; and the thunder of the flood transcending all. The water was more than two hundred yards from them, but the swirl of it as it slid past the tree-trunks looked ominous in the grey morning light.

Involuntarily she sighed and drew yet closer to her companion. Then she looked up to find him gazing at her, his grave eyes contradicting the faint smile on his lips. And she flushed a little, moving away.

"We'd better go farther upstream, where the banks are higher," he suggested. "It should be narrower there, and possibly easier to cross."

Rain, gentle but persistent, was falling again when they reached a bend where the river was still confined to its banks. It surged past them with a roar that drowned their voices, thick dark water flecked with brown foam, and strewn with the debris it had collected on its passage—logs, a dead sheep, manure.

"How long would we have to wait for it to go down?" Primula shouted above the noise.

"Depends how much rain they've had where it rises—and if it's raining there still."

"In other words—very uncertain." She looked at the river, and laughed rather doubtfully. "If there wasn't a breakfast on the other side of that, I'd stay right where I am!"

He was scanning the river with keen eyes.

"Fifty yards," he said, "and a strong current. Can you swim?"

"A— a bit."

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Drama of the outback

to step into more puddles than we have to."

They splashed along in the darkness, the rain, soft as a benediction, making murmurous sounds in the trees lining the road.

Once, when their eyes were well accustomed to the darkness and the road was clear before them, Roy made as if to drop her arm; and she clutched at his instinctively.

"Oh—don't go away!" she cried.

"It's comforting—like this—"

He gripped her arm even more firmly then, holding it against his side so that they walked in unison. She felt suddenly self-conscious, regretting her instinctive cry of protest, and wondering how foolish it would seem if she were to pull her arm away after all. But she did



"We've won through," Primula cried, as they gazed down at the house.



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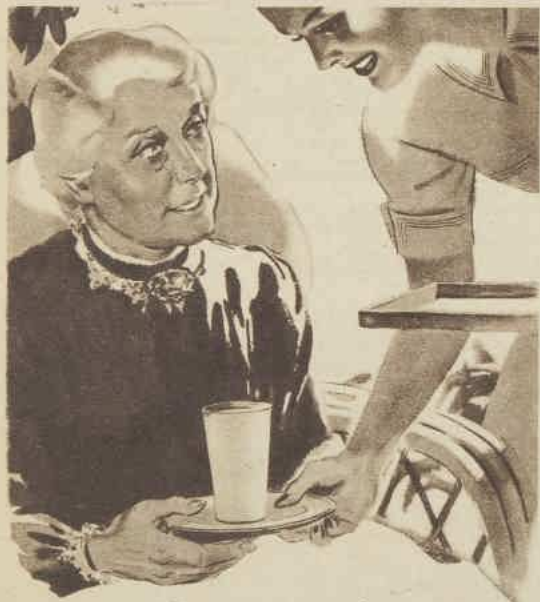
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Beauty Specialist's Grey Hair Secret

Tells How to Make Simple Remedy to Darken Grey Hair at Home.

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HORLICKS

"THAT makes it easier. Now keep your eyes open for a biggish apple-tree log." He fingered his coat-pocket. "How about a cigarette as a preliminary to that breakfast we're after?"

She took one, and they stood together smoking, watching the angry water. Logs swept in close to them because of the curve of the river, but they let them go. It was difficult to talk above the din, and his instructions were brief.

"I'll wade out as far as I can and grab a log, and you come too, as quick as you can. Get on the opposite side to me and put your arm over it, and cling for dear life. Then paddle, but don't tire yourself. We may have to go a good way down stream."

He threw his cigarette away, and took off his coat and shoes. "I think it would be better to sacrifice some clothes on the altar of safety—we don't want too many encumbrances. What about your boots?"

"I'll leave them here," she said; and looking at him she thought his face was freer of strain than she had yet seen it.

He came and stood very close to her, putting his hands on her shoulders.

"The overcoat," he said. "We'll have to leave it behind. But I'll remember you in this coat." And his open hands caressed the sleeves, lightly and briefly.

She said nothing, and he helped her out of the coat. Gathering it up with her boots, his own shoes, and the coat he had worn himself, he took them all back to higher ground; and while she waited for him she watched the water.

She had a smile for him when he came back.

"We won't do this if you'd rather not," he said.

"I suppose—there's no other way. We can't just sit down and starve and wait for the floods to go down." But the gentleness in his voice had disarmed her, and she found herself

giving incoherent expression to her secret, timorous thoughts. "But I did think—perhaps if we went back to the creek—I know it's six miles away, of course—but the Youngs' place is just across the creek and they'd see us—and maybe they could get help to us—or food, anyway..."

Her voice trailed away uncertainly. She was remembering how desperate his face had seemed in the car the night before. A matter of life and death, he'd said. She knew that he wanted to go on, not back the way he had come. She was hindering him by her very presence. He couldn't very well leave her there to struggle alone against floods or starvation. He wanted to escape from something—yes, she could guess that much—and she and the rain and the mud and the river had combined to thwart him.

She began to talk again, hurriedly.

"Let's cross—and get it over. When we cross I'll be nearer home. And you'll be nearer town." She looked up at him quickly, a flicker of malice prompting her question. "Had you forgotten that you're in a hurry to get to town?"

She watched his face darken.

"No," he said. "I hadn't forgotten."

His voice became harsh and quick. "If I'd forgotten, we'd have gone back to the creek and signalled to the Youngs. They could probably knock up a tin canoe or something, and there's a place down further where it would be safe enough to cross. You'd better do that. They'll see you all right. You might have to go without a meal to-day, but you'll be safe. But I've got to go on."

"No," she said. "I'm coming too."

HE shrugged his shoulders, and they stood together for several minutes more, waiting for the log that would help them to safety. When it came Roy strode swiftly into the water.

Then she saw that he had it firm in his grip, and she plunged into the water herself.

The cold shock of it took her breath away. It tore at her eagerly, wrenching her away from the bank, downstream. With a gasp of thankfulness she realised that she had reached the log.

"Hang tight!" Roy shouted.

The flood dinned in her ears, and pulled at her, pulled her away. She tightened her grip. She heard Roy's voice, almost lost to her:

"Nearly there!"

It was true. They were approaching another bend, and the current carried them inshore. Nearly there. She must summon enough energy for the final swim to land. There was a tree, all but its topmost branches submerged, a sure sign that they were close to the bank. But the current was terribly strong. The tree-top seemed to be rushing at them across an expanse of thundering brown water.

Then a thud that jarred every bone in her body...

Roy saw her sink. The water was frothing round the tree, and it was all he could do to swim back to it, leaving the log to go spinning down midstream again. He dived, and the world was brown instead of grey. She had washed against the tree. No, she was caught there.

He pulled with all his strength, his head ringing; but she was firmly caught against a branch. His eyes were aching, his lungs straining, and she was just a bundle of limp clothes washed against a tree-top... He came up for air, and dived again.

She was free. He couldn't get her to shore at that bend. They were swept out into midstream, and he had to support her somehow, keep her face out of the water. In towards shore again, but it was the wrong side of the river—not that it mattered now, if only he could make it. But he couldn't make it. Out into the flood again, part of the debris it had piled from the banks—and he was tired now. Unutterably tired.

He pulled her out on to the bank, and lay there for a second that seemed an hour, unmoving. Then he sat up, and leaning over her he worked the air into her lungs while he still struggled for air himself...

No Power Now

Continued from page 23

Unbelievably the sun was shining. Primula lay on her back, blinking her eyes in the sunlight, trying to make herself realise that hours must have gone by since she had seen that tree-top rushing towards her across the water. She must have hit it, then. Her head was throbbing, and her forehead was sore and tender to touch. But Roy had brought her safe ashore. She could see Roy out of the corner of her eyes—he sat with his knees drawn up and his hands hanging limply between them.

She began to feel uncomfortable. The sun had dried her clothes a little, so that they sagged about her limbs, heavy with mud. She was thinking how Roy had said: "We won't do this, if you'd rather not." In that moment she had had more power over him even than the passion to escape which so dominated him—until she had dissipated it with a taunting sentence.

"Roy," said Primula, sitting up rather painfully, "what side of the river are we on?"

"Thorby's."

She grinned at him, a small and mischievous grin.

"What a determined man you are! Even a flood and an unconscious woman on your hands can't alter your set purpose."

"It was a fluke," he said. He stood up, stretching his arms one after the other. "That's a nasty bruise on your forehead!"

"It feels so like an egg I could eat it! And my legs are still shaky, and there's still a few gallons of water in me—"

"You're a gallant little devil, to laugh," he said suddenly and with bitterness. And then, as she stopped abruptly, looking at him in surprise: "Do you realise that you nearly lost your life in that flood, because of me? Because I wouldn't abandon my own—not exactly praiseworthy plans—even to ensure your safety?"

"But you saved my life!"

"Oh—I pulled you out—but if it hadn't been for me you wouldn't have been in it at all. We'd have gone back towards Young's in the first place." He came towards her as if something impelled him, and gripped both her hands in his. "Primula! Will you forgive me?"

She could see a pulse throbbing in his throat. There was something that tortured him—she couldn't know what it was—but it drove him on remorselessly, changing him as the flood had changed the river, transforming the still depths in him to a savage, ugly torrent.

"You must forgive yourself," she said with sudden wisdom, her voice very soft. "You're at war with yourself."

"I suppose that's right," he laughed, not very happily; and he turned so that they stood side by side, tucking her arm against him as he had done in the darkness before dawn.

"I think we'd better start," he said. "It's a mile or so to Thorby's, isn't it? And—young woman—if I'm at war with myself it's because of you. When I started out I had no doubts or waverings. You're coming perilously close to awakening my conscience, just because you're what you are."

His voice was unsteady, in spite of the deliberate lightness of his tone. There was a little silence, full of profound, unspoken things.

"LET'S start," said Primula. "That breakfast might be a bit late, but we'll get it yet!"

It was nearly midday when they came within sight of the house—a hot and sticky midday, with puffy clouds still massed on the horizon.

Roy opened a gate, and they walked on towards the house, the noise of the flood still sounding in the distance, and the chorus of frogs unabated. Yet it all seemed part of a silence that grew deeper the closer they came. Primula saw Roy's forehead wrinkle doubtfully, and she frowned herself, trying to place something that puzzled her.

Then the explanation burst upon her.

"The dogs!" she cried. "Why aren't the dogs barking?"

They went through the rain-soaked garden and up the steep steps, anticipating now the closed windows and drawn blinds which greeted them. They walked round the verandah, calling perfunctorily, and Roy began to try the windows. Presently he found one which opened without much trouble.

"Don't know why old Thorby should pick just now to take a holiday!" Primula protested, scrambling through the window into a sparsely-furnished bedroom. "And if there's nothing to eat in the house—"

But there was plenty. Flour and sugar and a case of preserved eggs, and tins of fruit and meat.

"I'll eat 'em tins and all!" she said, pulling down one treasure after another from the high, dark kitchen shelves. "And nice dry wood, too!" she cried delightedly, as she saw Roy take kindling and firewood from a corrugated-iron recess beside the stove.

It was a memorable meal. Their joy in it was not the result only of hunger. An underlying unspoken companionship brought magic to it, changing Roy's sombre eyes to gaiety, deepening the color of Primula's mud-stained cheeks. They had forgotten the buffeting the flood had given them and the dampness of their clothes. They forgot that they had broken into a strange house and were taking advantage of its comforts unknown to its owner. They were alone together, well fed, sheltered—and the delight of it sparkled in their voices.

They began to speculate as to where the family could have gone, and how long they'd be away. Evidently they'd given the dogs to a neighbor to mind. It was unusual, though.

"Mr. Thorby so seldom goes anywhere," Primula explained. "Even to town. He lives with his unmarried daughter, and though she goes away sometimes I've never heard of Mr. Thorby going, too. You'd think he'd get sick of it, stuck out here. Just works all day on his bit of land—"

"Perhaps," Roy said slowly, "he loves his bit of land. People do. You wouldn't know. But the land—your own land—it can be mother and brother and child. Everything."

She looked at him across the table, his intent face illumined with a shaft of sunlight from the window.

"You're a fanatic," she said.

He laughed. "Maybe it's just the result of hunger satisfied," he said lightly. "And now I'd give my kingdom for a smoke."

Please turn to page 25

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"MR. THORBY

might have some tobacco stored somewhere," Primula said, jumping up. "We might as well burgle him properly while we're about it."

But they searched in vain, and gave up presently to wash the plates they had used and stack them away again. When they had finished Primula happened to look down at her bedraggled shirt and breeches, and her bare feet with their coating of dried mud. She raised her hand to her hair, a faint blush staining her cheeks.

"I must look awful," she said with a touch of constraint.

He reached out and took both her hands in his, pulling her gently towards the window, and paused there, gazing down at her.

"I like looking at you with the sun in your hair," he said quietly. He laughed, setting her free. "I wouldn't worry about your looks if I were you."

She was nervous now, and ill at ease; conscious of him again as a stranger.

"Haven't we—haven't we better ring up?" she began. "I ought to ring up home and you—"

His eyes were unreadable. "What was it you—said a matter of life and death—" she stumbled.

His face frightened her, it looked so dark and set, and his eyes gleamed so wildly. And he came towards her again, grasping her arm in a grip that hurt.

"Forget what I said, do you hear!"

For a moment more he gazed at her, then he dropped her arm so suddenly it startled her. He walked across to the other side of the room, and seated himself on the table there. "What I've got to do," he continued smoothly, "is to get into town, as quickly as I can. Now I've had something to eat I can start straight away."

She stood very still.

"It's twenty miles from here," she pointed out quietly.

"I'll be there by to-morrow morning."

"Well, why don't you start? I'll ring up Dad and let him know where I am, and he'll ride over and get me straight away. You needn't worry about me. I'll be quite all right."

"And will you tell your father how you crossed the flood?"

"I won't mention your name, if that's what you're afraid of!"

A cloud crossed the sun, and the room darkened. Roy got to his feet, moving swiftly towards her, the sharp antagonism in his eyes as swift and real as in hers. He put his hands on her shoulders, as he had done that morning before they had tackled the flood; but now his grip hurt her, and his eyes were bright and hard. She faced him proudly, her head high, and did not care if he heard the angry beating of her heart. She hated him. Him, and his barbarous secret—whatever it was he sought to escape—but she would not wince though her shoulders ached under his grasp.

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No Power Now

Continued from page 24

He kissed her savagely.

She thought: "I should be surprised; I should be angry." Then the clouds thickened over the sun; she gave up thinking. She knew that she kissed him back. She didn't care. She who had been keeping her kisses for some dream-lover so different from this Roy Dean.

When he released her she turned and stood looking out at the gathering storm. She was still trembling with scorn of herself and of him. She listened to the grumble of distant thunder, and did not move till she felt him turn her face towards his with strangely gentle hands. He looked as though he fumbled for an apology; but all he said was her name, very softly: "Primula, Primula!"

Her heart contracted. She felt suddenly that she would remember every line and feature of his face, remember it all her days, remember



"Roy—Roy, darling," Primula murmured softly.

it as beloved. It was gentle now, as his hands had been. She couldn't bear to see the bleakness she had first known in it come back to stay. She lifted her hand and smoothed his thick hair, and knew that with that gesture she surrendered herself as she could never have done by a kiss.

A faint glare of lightning flickered through the room.

"Roy," she said softly, "won't you tell me? Tell me what it is that worries you?"

He put one arm about her, looking out at the dark western sky.

"All right," he said, and gazed down at a straggling row of geraniums just outside—they seemed an unreal, pulsing green in the storm light. "It starts—with a bit of land, like Thorby's. A pretty big bit of land to begin with. Longwood Station belonged originally to my great-grandfather, and it wasn't cut up as it is now."

"My father and his brother were both killed in the war, and my grandfather left Longwood to Vernon Dean, my cousin, because he was several years my senior. But I was to be given a half-share in the profits, and was to live at the home—stead. Vernon didn't take kindly to the management. He lived in Brisbane. Pretty wildly. Well, bit by bit the place was sold up to pay his debts. Even the old home—stead."

"It meant a lot to me, the old place." He paused, and it was a while before he spoke again. His arm tightened about Primula's waist, and he looked now, not at the geraniums, but at the bruised and swollen sky.

"Well, Vernon got so broke he came back to live with me in a boundary-rider's cottage on the couple of thousand acres that was all we had left. He drank himself into D.T.'s pretty often. I'd worked—a good many years—trying to make up for the things Vernon did to the place, trying to get the old home—stead back. That land—all that was left of it—I felt pretty deeply about it. And I could see that sooner or

later even the bit we had left would go like the rest. I tried to persuade Vernon to give the management to me.

"Well, there were plenty of rows, and I stayed on because I loved the place, and because—I knew he'd drink himself to death eventually. If there was any place left by then, it would be mine. My own. I thought with that to start with, I'd get all Longwood back in time. That was all I lived for."

Lightning ripped the sky, and the thunder now was sharper.

"Then yesterday," he concluded, "we had a final row and I cleared out."

There was still a question that troubled Primula, monopolising her thoughts even to the exclusion of the pity that moved her heart. She touched his forehead silently, with soft fingers.

"But why were you in such a hurry to get to town?" she said.

His arm tightened about her so that she could hardly breathe, and his face—it looked ravaged now, it starkly by the increasing lightning. She could hear his heart thudding heavily. It was a long time before he spoke; and so silent was he, as the growl of the storm came nearer, that she forgot her question, remembering only that his arm was about her, strongly, pressing her to him.

The wind rose, rattling the window madly.

Roy turned away from it, and encircled her with both his arms. He was smiling now, very gently. A swift white whip of lightning licked the house, the thunder vibrating in the heavy air. But the centre of the storm would miss them. It was going round to the south.

He kissed her again.

"Primula, I like saying your name—little Primula. I'll always remember you in that ridiculous overcoat, and now, in my arms."

He stopped, his smile gone. "Primula!" His voice was changed, urgent. "There are things—"

There was a spatter of hail cracking against the window-pane. He put his cheek against hers, so that she might hear his quiet words.

"My darling—I didn't know it could happen in a few brief hours—but I think you know that I love you. Forever." He put her from him, leaning back with his elbows on the window-sill, looking at her. "Will you remember that? Even when I've told you—what I've got to tell you?"

She had no words. Plump drops of rain were falling on the soft earth outside, and loudly on the iron above them. The lightning gleamed around him. His face was a mask.

"I murdered Vernon," he said.

She did not cry out. She looked at him mutely, and the rumble of thunder about them went unheard. Then:

"Tell me," she said.

"We had a row. I got out the car and left. I'd gone a few miles—I could see it was going to rain. I thought I'd go back for chains to stop the wheels slipping. I drove across the paddocks because it was shorter, and left the car at the top of a cliff near the house. I went down for the chains. I could see Vernon down at the horse-yards—he hadn't heard the car. He was cursing and shouting, very drunk, and saddling his horse. I saw him get on, and gallop the horse out of the yard. Goodness knows where he intended going. He went like fury across the paddock still yelling—then the horse went down. Way he pulled at it, I think, jabbing in his spurs at the same time. I saw him fall. He lay still, and I went over to him. His leg was broken, twisted under him. He was starting to come to—and I left him. Left him there, with a broken leg, to die."

THE rain streamed in through the window, unnoticed by either. His gaze hungered over her face, as though trying to read some meaning into its white intensity.

"So you see," he went on, his voice quieter now, as steady as the swishing rain, "you see now why I had to get to town. To get away. So he'd die, and the place'd be mine, and everybody'd think it happened after I left. He'd die all right, exposed as he is—no one will come there for weeks—"

She raised her hand, touching his lips.

"Poor Roy," she said, too softly for him to hear above the rain. Then she shuddered and flung her arms about his neck, her whole body shaking as she sobbed. He stroked her shoulders, calming her, while he looked unseeing into the dark old kitchen.

"Shh!" he said. "Better stop crying, Primula. You've got to ring up your people and tell them you're here. And the doctor. Ring up the doctor and tell him to come at once to Longwood—somehow. You'll be all right here, dearest."

"You're going back?"

"Yes, I'm going back. I might be able to get a horse—"

"You'll get there. You'll save him," she said simply.

Her hands were curled against his chest, and her head drooped on his shoulder.

"Maybe all this—maybe the way we've known each other makes up for it being such a little time. For I love you, I always will." She stirred in his arms. "Roy—Roy darling—the flood will be higher—dearest, cross it safely for my sake!"

She went with him to the river, and watched him wade out into it with confident stride. She felt that he was master of those dark, roasting waters; they could have no power over him now.

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Digger of Yeronga

Continued from page 5

THE great homestead slept quietly in the early morning hours. He raced now to the house itself where he had last seen Adrian Morgan, dignity to the winds, yelping joyously as he ran. He entered the gates opening to the long, pine-fringed drive. He would bound across that wide verandah, along the hall, into his master's bedroom and on to the great old-fashioned bed.

Then came a sound. He stopped dead, every hair raised on his back. For a split second he paused between pleasure and duty, then turned and loped in the direction of the disturbing noise. From the far north-east paddock the wind brought him the faint sound of sheep in distress. Then the disturbing smell of blood. He knew well the shape death would take to those helpless beasts to whose fate he was bound by generations of sheep-dog ancestors.

Pierce, unloved, unwanted dogs, driven by neglect to pitiless adventuring, were worrying and killing the sheep. Led by his old enemy, a great yellow beast of uncertain lineage whose meagre rations never satisfied his vast hunger, the mongrel waits from a township, some miles away, had set out on the murderous jaunt.

In their trail they left dead and dying sheep, and now they had found, in the north-eastern paddock of Yeronga station, this isolated group of sheep. It was just plain carnage. Warm blood streamed from the terrified animals, unleashing every primitive instinct in the attacking cur's criminal nature. Back, back through a thousand years of domesticity. They were wolves again.

Into this bloody, bleating turmoil, Digger flung himself. Outnumbered, he still had that extra intelligence and that perfect training. And breeding.

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He dealt with two small dogs. Then he attacked the big yellow killer, which clung to the throat of a beautifully-fleeced aristocrat. His outraged emotions lent youth to his aged limbs. The surprised leader, enraged with pain, released his hold on the sheep and the two dogs rolled over in that desperate struggle for supremacy which dramatizes the animal world.

Here, in the pale morning, Digger fought to hold his possessions, his land, his life from the murderous invader.

Both dogs were old enemies, and had waited for this moment each knew would some day come. To a human the fight was frenzied and incomprehensible. A mass of hair, white fangs, and blood from which issued savage sounds. But to each dog every movement had meaning.

every sound was an age-old curse of death.

The sounds of battle had now aroused a storm of war cries from the chained dogs up at the homestead. Jim MacDonald, the new owner of Yeronga station, jumped from his bed, seized his gun, and ran to join the men who were already hurrying about unchaining the dogs. They set off towards the north-east paddock, firing as they ran to frighten the marauding dogs. The mongrel pack wavered and fled before them.

Digger rose slowly from the body of the yellow dog. He waited for the words of praise he knew would come.

"There's one of the brutes still there."

Jim raised his gun and took careful aim. In the early morning light

he could not see too clearly. He gave a grunt of satisfaction as the black dog leapt into the air and sank on to the grass.

"Well, I got one of the mongers!"

He walked over to the dying animal, anger consuming him. Then he stopped, astonished. A sheep-dog! Bad business. And a silver collar.

He bent and read in the sun's first rays, "Digger of Yeronga!"

Digger's senses were dying with him, but as Jim leant over him a familiar odor delighted his nose. The old raincoat fell, like a gentle pall, over his head. The old raincoat which Adrian Morgan had worn for years, and which a stranger still found useful. The faint, ineradicable smell of his old master lingered in its shabby folds.

Digger wagged his tail slightly and tried to lick MacDonald's outstretched hand. Whatever this stranger had done to him, it must be right, for he was not vested with the mantle of authority?

(Copyright)

Look for the Blister

Continued from page 21

"INDEED," he began with sarcasm. "It appears we have another misunderstanding. I have never set eyes on this young person, before."

One gloved hand began to pull at its mate.

What had happened became clear enough: Herman had found me gone. This man had replaced Mrs. Maru Moto on the plane, where they banked on being able to work off the old name trick once again. They had taken a gamble that the change in timetable turned out to be genuine.

"Watch out," I yelled. A bare hand had gone to his lips. Someone hurried past me and caught him a straight one on the jaw. He went down like a telegraph pole in a willy. Over him stood Demaret.

"He was biting the blister, didn't you see?" Demaret said, grinning. I suddenly felt an awful fright to look at, as well as being all in the dark: a bad mixture.

Then the chief appeared and patted my shoulder as if I were a small girl, which enraged me more.

"Only one bird and a blister, this shot, Meg. But both wanted specimens. Mr. Demaret here spent the night in a cell—he only succeeded in getting an interview with me an hour ago. Even then I took a little convincing. But we were just in time."

I couldn't help it, I was overwrought and looked hideous, and there was Demaret grinning—"Time for what?" I said.

Demaret stooped over the fallen figure before he answered. "To stop him swallowing this." He handed me a pellet. "Your bag, mate," he said, in a voice that took some resisting. "It's a valuable one, too, unless I'm mistaken. No—it's not poison, it's plans. But soluble. This blister is hollow—didn't I tell you I had it bored? And I also knew the sort of ring Lee Ming made of it—the Chinese love double purposes. There is a hinge that can be opened by tongue-pressure—who owns the ring can carry in it poison, or perfume, or baby's curls—or secret plans, written on soluble tissues. The Maru Motos bought it. They'll be very sorry to lose it."

"Where's Mrs. Maru Moto?" I demanded, as he seemed to know so much.

"Ah, she's missing," replied the chief. "Mr. Demaret told us she

booked at an hotel as Miss Lee Ming, a merchant's daughter from Hongkong. But she checked out last night and no one knows—"

"The house in—" I cried.

"Yes, I told them about that, too, Meg," said Demaret. "And when I knew you'd gone down there—"

"At any rate," said the chief with another of those aggravating pats. "We got you back—and we also got a man on guard—"

"Herman!"

"Yes, Herman," said Demaret, "But the others are the heads—"

"Well, suppose you and I put our heads together to catch theirs?" Demaret grinned too much—and I was dreadfully tired.

"Who are you?" I demanded.

"Are you still a married woman?" he shot back.

"Not this morning," I was fed-up with his nonsense.

"But you might consider being one by to-night?" He could surely see I'd had enough? "I'm attached to the navy, Meg. I have been all the time. I had just about solved the blister racket, when you poked your charming nose in and had me arrested as one of the gang. I don't blame you. I quite obviously knew too much."

"Very obviously," I really was rather nasty.

He held out the ring. "Neat job?" I gave the ring and the pellet of plans to the chief. "I wonder how many messages it's carried," I said.

"It's certainly a lovely ring."

"I have a better," said Demaret. "See this—this is the pearl that came out of the blister—you quite overlooked to ask me what I found inside the first time, Meg! That was important. Because I would like you to accept this ring as a memento."

"But—it's worth hundreds!"

"About four—to be exact. Too good for a ring-setting unless for a special person—but I had you in my mind, even in Broomie, Meg. Perhaps, by this evening, you could make up your mind to having a real husband in that flat I already know—shall we say—intimately?"

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